

THE  
*Polite Gentleman;*  
OR,  
REFLECTIONS

Upon the several Kinds of

W I T,

V I Z.

In Conversation, Books, and  
Affairs of the World.

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Done out of FRENCH.

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L O N D O N,

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T O

The Right Honourable

CHARLES

*Earl of Dorset, and Middlesex,  
Knight of the most Noble Order of  
the Garter, and one of His Ma-  
jesty's Most Honourable Privy  
Council.*

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*My Lord,*

**T**O whom cou'd a Treatise of  
Wit more justly fly for Pro-  
tection, than to your Lord-  
ship, who are so undoubted a Master,  
and so generous a Patron of it? The

## *The Dedication.*

*Muses* have long acknowledged You their Sovereign, and indeed your Lordship deserves this Eminent Title much better than the *Richelieu's*, and *Colbert's* either of this or former Ages, since you have not only encouraged them to write by your Munificence, but by your Example, which is always more efficacious. But tho', my Lord, this were Glory enough for any other Person but your Lordship, yet Wit is not the only shining Quality for which the World admires You: To a happy Imagination, and lively Genius You have reconciled the severity and profoundness of Judgment: And for ought I know are the only, but I am sure the best refutation of what the Author, I now with all submission offer to You, has advanced, *viz.* that Wit and Judgment are incompatible Talents, that never meet in the same Person. The whole Nation, my Lord, has no less owned the Statesman than admired the Courtier in You, and our Island, of whose

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## *The Dedication.*

Government You had a Share in our Monarch's absence, ow'd its Repose and Peace to your wise Administration as well as it does its Politeness to Your Vivacity and Wit.

Tho' this, my Lord, I hope may be sufficient excuse for the boldness of this Address, yet I was farther encouraged to make You this public acknowledgement when I considered in what an obliging manner Your Lordship received me some Years ago in *Paris*, where You were pleased to lay Your Commands upon me to wait upon You when I returned to *England*. Being conscious to my self that I had nothing of my own growth that was fit to entertain Your Lordship, I have presumed to lay the following Translation in all humility at Your Feet, which originally comes from a Polite Kingdom, where You won the applause of all that had the happiness of knowing You. But I am sensible

*The Dedication.*

that I have too much trespass'd upon  
Your Lordships Modesty and Patience,  
and therefore beg leave to subscribe  
my self,

*My Lord,*

*Your Lordships*

*most Humble,*

*most Obedient,*

*and most Devoted Servant.*

Hen. Barker.

P R E-

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# PREFACE

## OF THE

### TRANSLATOR.

**T**HE following Discourse gave me so much pleasure and satisfaction in the Reading, that to impress it the better in my Memory, as likewise to employ a few vacant hours I resolved to translate it, and when that was over, I was easily prevail'd upon to make it public. The Author of it seems all along to be a Man of Admirable Sense and Penetration, who had convres'd long in the World and made nice Observations upon what he had seen. His Language is pure and easie but not swelling or affected, the common defect of most Writers, who have written about Wit, and disgraced it by their Performance. He contents himself to express his Meaning in a familiar plain Style, without an affected pomp and parade of Words which

A 4. generally

## PREFACE.

generally speaking serve not so much to instruct, as to amuse or else to impose upon the Reader. Thus he talks and argues like a Philosopher and a Man of Business, not like a flashy Orator who rather endeavours to adorn than to explain his Argument, and is more solicitous about the harmony of his Periods and the elegance of his Diction than either the closeness or justness of his Reasoning. I must own indeed that our Author's Philosophical Speculations are sometimes too nice, and perhaps will not be found true upon a strict examination; for which reason a Learned Gentleman to whom I communicated this Manuscript before it was handed to the Press, wou'd have persuaded me to have omitted all that relates to the Philosophy: but I considered that this cou'd not be done without a manifest injury to my Author, whom I had not honestly translated, if I had either left out or disguised his Sentiments. Besides I had not dealt fairly with the Reader, who perhaps may approve his Notions, or if he does not, may be glad to see what a Learned Man's Opinion is upon such difficult Points. As this Age has cultivated Philosophy with more application and success than any of the preceding ones, so we find it has likewise produced a greater variety of Hypotheses; most of which made a great figure in the World and found abundance of  
Ad-

## P R E F A C E.

*Admirers when they first appeared, but are now laid aside, and condemned as vain and precarious, and few of them keep up their first Reputation and Credit. The famous Gallend and Monsieur des Cartes, (not to mention Mr. Hobbs, Dr. Willis and several of our own Countrymen) were they now alive wou'd have the mortification to see their different Schemes either neglected or exploded, which in their time seem'd to meet with universal approbation. If therefore our Author when he comes to account for the several sorts of Wit in a Philosophical manner, has a little overshot himself, he has done no more than abundance of celebrated Virtuoso's before him: And if upon so nice a subject as the Oeconomy of the Humane Structure, the motion and effects of the Animal Spirits, and the mutual influence of the Body upon the Soul and the Soul upon the Body (which after so many fruitless endeavours has not been yet satisfactorily explain'd) he has fallen into some mistakes, they ought to be pardoned in him, since the best things we are able to offer upon this head, amount to no more than bare Conjectures.*

*This is what I thought necessary to say in my Authors behalf, as to his Philosophy, which is the least part in him, all the rest of his Book being plain and obvious, and carrying it's own Conviction along with it. As for the*

## PREFACE.

*Translation, I can assure the Reader beforehand, that it is faithful and conformable to the Original which I always kept in my sight; judging it a less defect to be not so very scrupulous about my Language which after all is only the exterior Garb, than to depart from my Author's genuine meaning, which is the Life and Spirit of every Performance.*

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A  
LETTER  
FROM THE  
AUTHOR  
TO HIS  
FRIEND.

**I** Perceive by your Letter, Sir, that you would have me consent to the Publishing the small Manuscript I left the other day in your hands. Have you well considered the Proposal you made me? and would you willingly expose a Friend to the Censure of the Publick, without pre-engaging it in some manner in his Favour? This small Treatise (the present Subject of our Dispute) will sooner bring those terrible

### *The Author's Letter*

rible Gentlemen the Criticks upon me, than engage the Reader in my Favour.

My Discourse is on *Wit*: A topping Subject I must confess, and such as may excite the Curiosity of most Readers. It makes Noise enough in the World, and there are few but delight to hear it discours'd of; but when they find how I have handled this Argument, they'll immediately cry, What does this Author mean? He neither argues like a Man of Breeding, nor a *Wit*, but like a morose Philosopher. Instead of affecting a delicate fine Stile, he uses nothing but down right Reason; instead of Sparkling Expressions, and telling us pretty and agreeable Things on the Subject of *Wit*, he only seriously examines its Character. This looks like a very insipid Piece. This, Sir, is what those we call *Wits* will immediately say, and perhaps many others. But what will they not say, when having read some part of my Book, as the Table for Instance, they find me engag'd, and are convinc'd that I declare openly against them? If at the first glance of this Work they began to distrust it, they will then absolutely condemn it.

Those Gentlemen are very humourfom, the Hand that touches them must be very light, and pass extream nicely not to make them

to his *Friend*.

them wince. One is always in danger of provoking them, who in the least ventures to discourse freely of their pretended Qualities. 'Tis the same with the *Wits*, as with some Women dress'd in all their Finery, who cannot suffer the least Breath of Wind, for fear of disordering their Apparel.

What need you trouble your self? you will answer immediately. What does it signify if the *Wits* do find fault with your Writings, provided you please the Men of Sense and Judgment? I must confess, could I flatter my self with that Honour, I should not be so scrupulous, nor concern'd if the Men of Sense were the smaller Number. But I see this Inconvenience, that if my Book should have the good Fortune not to be dislik'd by them, it would however disoblige some, while it pleas'd others, and I do not desire to have any Difference with the *Wits*.

Besides in a Subject which ought only to be manag'd for the Diversion of those who love to read, and who read only to pass away the Time, I have taken quite another Method. I have not only retrench'd those vain Discourses which serve more to swell a Book, than to instruct the Mind; but I have also banish'd all the sparkling Descriptions of a lively Imagination, which  
pre-

*The Author's Letter, &c.*

pre-engages the Readers, and Flatters their Inclinations. Will they not take it amiss of me? Consider this Reason, Sir, and after you have done so, do what you please. Let it moulder in your Study, or try its Fortune in the World. If you resolve upon the latter, I have two Things to desire of you. The first, that you will excuse me for not complimenting the Courteous Reader at the Head of my Book, for this Reason, that I have no Complement to make him. The second, that you do not put my Name in the Frontespiece, to have it afterwards inserted into the Advertisements among stray'd Horses and stolen Spaniels in the Gazette. *Adieu.*

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A  
T A B L E.

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O F

W I T.

**T**HE real Perfection in all Things ought only to be esteem'd, and the preference we give the one before the other, ought to proceed from its being more excellent; after we have deliberately weigh'd and compar'd them. This Truth is Universally receiv'd, and allow'd of when-ever propos'd; but I know not how it comes about that we are so strongly convinc'd of this Principle, and yet make so ill an use of it.

We neither love nor esteem Things but as they can contribute to our Happiness, or serve our Interest; and, because for the most part we judge of them with precipitation, before we have inquir'd into their Nature and Worth, it happens that we call that Perfect and Excellent, which is

B

neither



neither the one nor the other ; and Condemn that as Evil which perhaps we should have found to be Good, if we had more nicely consider'd it.

We generally place Perfection in a certain *Medium*, the Extreame of which are known to be Vicious. 'Tis agreed we cannot wander from this *Medium*, without running into Excess, or falling into some Defect ; and yet we always lanch into the Extreame, and blunder from the one to the other without intermission, nay, without touching at this *Medium*,

Be it Error, or down-right Ignorance, that keeps us off from this point of Perfection, which makes the value and price of Things, there is nothing wherein we are more subject to deceive ourselves than in the Judgment we make of the Qualities and Nature of Wit. Those overstrain'd Expressions we make use of when we discourse of it, plainly prove that we are at a Nonplus when we come to judge of the Perfection of a Thing we make so very common, though rare and very little known. Those lofty noisy Terms of *admirable, excellent, fine Wit*, have a double meaning ; and only raise confus'd and false Ideas ; and we should be more confounded than we imagine, were we oblig'd to give a Reason why



Part I. Of WIT. 3

why we find an infinite deal of Wit in some, very little in others, whilst we are most commonly content with our own.

Now since we are to regulate our esteem of Things by the Idea of the Perfection we discover in them, if this Idea be false, the Esteem which is built upon it cannot but be ill grounded.

Such for instance may be the esteem we commonly have for that Quality call'd *Wit*, if, notwithstanding its being so much extoll'd and courted as it is in the World, 'tis no less Vicious, and is as far remote from a just *Medium*, as what we call *Stupidity*; which is so much beneath it, and is indeed its very opposite.\*

The Question is as important, as curious; therefore I thought my self oblig'd to make some Reflections upon that which is call'd *Wit*, and that we call *Stupidity*, to see if the esteem the World has of that, is better grounded than its scorn of this; and if there be any Reason so much to applaud the one, and despise the other, as is now the Fashion of the World.

Men's ordinary Conversation, the Books they compose, and their Affairs in the World, are the best Tryals of *Wit* and *Stupidity*. We can only discover Men by  
B 2 what

what they say, write, or do. Let us now examine wherein they best shew themselves.

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## Of W I T in Conversation.

### I.

THE Necessities of Life are not the sole Reasons of Men's Conversing with one another. As they have many other Wants for which they cannot provide by themselves, they are oblig'd to discover them to each other, in hopes of Assistance which the Natural Friendship between them seems to promise; and which, they do not refuse each other; because it is reciprocal. 'Tis not enough to live, if we don't live happy and content. So that besides the Necessaries of Life, we must likewise have those things which may serve to make it happy. The Pleasure of Conversation being that which chiefly contributes to this Happiness, it is not to be wondred at if we desire and search

Part I. *in Conversation.*

§.

search after it with so much eagerness, and that we set it off, and season it with all that can make it most agreeable. Let us examine as near as we can, after what manner this is perform'd, and wherein these Agreements consist.

II.

We communicate our Sentiments to others by Words and Expressions, which stir up in the Hearers other Notions relating to the first. These second Thoughts being follow'd with proper Expressions, reciprocally excite new Notions in the Mind of the first that spoke; and those in an Instant enter into the Mind of others, to produce the same effect. 'Tis by this means that our Minds entertain among themselves a sort of Union very useful to Society for which Men were Born.

But as if Words and Expressions were not sufficient, or as if they were but equivocal, and Signs that gave not full assurance of our Mind and Heart, they are accompany'd with a certain Air plainly shewing it self on the Speaker's Countenance, and coming as it were, to strengthen what he says, by the Impression it makes upon the Hearers;

whom it persuades so much the better, because it is stronger, and the Action more lively.

I say, as if Expressions did not suffice; for it is certain, that the Air that artificially spreads it self over our Countenance, after the movement of our Heart, and advances of our Mind, is a kind of mute Language, which makes People have less reason to suspect our Words, because it cannot so easily belye and disguise it self.

### III.

'Tis this Commerce of Thoughts and Actions, which makes us so much delight in Conversation, and so curious in the choice of those Persons whose Notions seem to us the finest, whose Sentiments most lively, and Actions most agreeable. Whose Company is more acceptable than that of those, who, by their Coldness, are incapable of stirring us up as much as is necessary to defend us from that heaviness which seizes and oppresses us, when we are for some time without Action.

In effect, what is more dismal than a Man alone abandon'd to himself, who thinks of nothing, or who believes he  
thinks

thinks of nothing, because he has none but rambling unfixt Thoughts; or if you will, who being resolv'd to fix his Thoughts upon some Subject, is at the same time taken up with empty and profound Notions which only serve to distract and trouble him, when perhaps his heated Fancy deludes him, and makes him believe they enlighten him much above others.

What an Emptiness must there be in the Heart of this Man, who is incapable of all agreeable Sentiments, and of all exterior Impression; and who being left to his own raving Fancies, must of necessity be at last disgusted by too great a Calm, which, leaving him without Motion, leaves him also without Pleasure.

Society brings us out of this Melancholy State; Company revives, and Conversation animates us. Men joining from all parts, to do that together which they could not asunder, produce a thousand Things which wholly owe their being but to the Dispositions we reciprocally communicate to each other, and which would never have appear'd, had we not rous'd them up from that Depth in which they lay as it were buried.

## IV.

The Heart finds not less advantage than the Mind, in discovering both what it is, and what it loves, its Condition and Inclination. For Conversation creates those agreeable Ties which bind us one to the other, and are so much the more happy and durable, as the Conformity of the Humour and Passion whence they proceed, is the more intire and perfect. We also often receive from those we Converse with such Marks of Honour and Esteem, as by our Condition, and much more our particular Merit, we may lawfully pretend to, and which we freely bestow the one on the other, either out of Decency or Duty.

Now if we change our Discourse from serious to more free and agreeable Matters; who does not know the charming Pleasures that we tast; of which one of the most exquisite is to have been able to give Satisfaction to others, and to have the happiness to please; which occasions that we never break off our Conversation better satisfied, than when we may flatter our selves in some measure that others are so with us.

V. What

## V.

What I have said is one Branch of the Advantages Men receive from the Use of Words and Conversation. Let us examine how they make use of these Advantages.

There are Men in the World who scarcely reap any Benefit by them, because they have no Knowledge nor Sense of them. There are others who make an ill use of them, because they are too sensible. We see sometimes Men who are so Cold and Melancholy, that one would think them to be without Sense and Thought, as well as without Words; difficult to be mov'd, they neither please, nor endeavour to please; will neither know, nor be known. Company is more troublesome to them, than the most dismal Solitude; Men without any Relish or Sense of what we call Esteem, Honour, Union, Friendship, Correspondence, agreeable Conversation; and whom I should think the unhappiest of all Men, if in this their Unhappiness they were not so fortunate as to be insensible of it.

## VI.

If some have no Sense, nor Relish of those Things, there are an infinite Number of others who are too fond of them.

What cannot the Pleasure of being seen, respected and distinguish'd, by any Quality whatsoever, but more particularly by their *Wit* in Conversation, work on the Minds of some Men; where their Pride is flatter'd by the marks of Esteem they for the most part receive from their Admirers! How strangely must a great many others be affected by those Pleasures, and agreeable Thoughts and Conceptions, with which we use to be so tickled in free and familiar Conversation, where we are pleas'd with the Correspondence of those *Wits* that divert us; whilst the Vanity of those *Wits* finds its full Satisfaction in the Caresses and Applauses of its Hearers.

These are, however, the two Things which contribute the most to deceive us in the Opinion we have of the quality of *Wit*; I would say Pride and Pleasure. Pride cheats those who pretend to have *Wit*; because it blinds and puffs them up: Pleasure cheats those who admire them, because it pre-ingles them in favour of the



the pretended *Wits* who give them this Pleasure.

In like manner, two Things very opposite to those above mentioned, may make us very uneasy in the Company of those whom we properly ought to call *Stupid*; viz. Their Slowness or Timidity, which makes them distrust themselves; and the Impatience, or Disgust they cause, which makes them troublesome to others.

To convince ones self of these Truths, it is very requisite to make a serious Reflection on three Things. The *first*, what we commonly understand by the Word *Wit*, and who are the Persons to whom we ordinarily give this Qualification. The *second*, what is the Genius, and what Dispositions of Body and Mind are to be found in those sorts of Persons. And *lastly*, if it be truly the Mind, or some other inherent Quality of the Soul, as for Example, the Imagination and the Memory, which is the Cause of *Wit*, and which deceives, by the secret Pride it inspires, or by the sensible Pleasure it affords.

It will not be less necessary in the next place to make the same, or very near the same Reflections on those we call *Stupid*; to know if there be no more requir'd to understand

understand them, than a simple Judgment on their outward Appearance, or, if it be requisite to examine more nicely their Character. Let us begin with *Wit*.

## VII.

Tho' we are not very well satisfied what we ought to call *Wit*, there are however certain Characters, which fix, in some measure, this general Term; and show us who they are, upon whom we most commonly bestow it.

A Person who with a free Air, certain measur'd, but easie Motions, begins by agreeably moving those he meets with; who in the next place produces on the Subject in debate, new and singular Thoughts, which he adorns with Expressions natural and lively, who has the Secret to make them receiv'd, as trivial and confus'd as they are, by piercing and bold Strokes which delicately touch the Hearers; is almost every where taken for a Man of Wit.

A Man of such a Character never fails of Admirers. He is esteem'd, follow'd, and applauded; and he himself discovers by the pleasing Countenance of his Company, what favourable Dispositions he has insinuated.

ated in their Hearts. He admires himself for it in private, and persuades himself he is Master of that Noble Quality we call *Wit*, which claims Distinction and Honour.

## VIII.

Another perhaps, who not troubles himself so much about the Choice and Fineness of his Thoughts, makes himself never the less esteem'd, by I know not what manner of lofty serious Discourse, which attracts and draws Admiration. Tho' he is a great Talker, yet since he talks well, varies his Conversation, and steals smoothly from one Subject to another; we hear him without uneasiness, and follow him without taking notice whether he does not lead us too far: Always lively and quick in his Discourse, his Action hides the extent of it, and makes us slip over his useless Digressions. If we nicely examine him, he is ready at Repartee; he neither hesitates nor confounds himself; he amuses, he possesses us, and has some Pretence to the Title of *Wit*, if he escapes the Malice of great Talkers like himself, and avoids to repeat Things which were once thought diverting; I mean, If he has the

Secret.

Secret to surprise us always with new Matters.

A *Wit* of this Character, with all his Vivacity, pleases not so well as the first. The Things, he says, being not so extraordinary, are not so charming; however they meet with Acceptance, and have their Time. The other is like an artificial Fire-work, which at the first sight dazzles and surprises; but is as soon spent, and shews it self only by intervals; but it is with the latter as with those Fires which are not indeed so sparkling, but last longer. 'Tis the great Variety that makes this sort of *Wit*; as an exquisite one, or such as is thought so, makes the other.

## IX.

There is a third sort of Men who take less care to think, than talk well. They are very nice and curious in the choice of Words, and fine Terms; but empty and void of good Sense and solid Instructions. What they say has nothing remarkable in it, yet it pleases, because it is set out with Modish Expressions.

There is a kind of singular Language, which is in use at some certain Times, and amongst certain People. The Vulgar

gar have their Words and manner of speaking ; the *Beau Monde* has theirs. The inferiour Sort affect the use of antiquated Words, Proverbs, and trivial Equivocations, even amongst Persons of Quality, Proverbs, Equivocations, Puns, and Quibbles were formerly in credit ; but the Politeness of the Age has brought them to neater Expressions, to a less vulgar Language, to more delicate Figures, and a less Affectation of fine Words. But there is a knack in setting Things off to the best Advantage, a singular way to please, which, tho' study'd, we endeavour to make it seem natural.

If there are many who either know it not, or who neglect it, there are others who have a wonderful Talent in making a seasonable use of it. With Words free and easie, a Pronunciation clear and bold, and a certain Tone of the Voice, they make even Trifles well receiv'd. They please without our knowing either how, or where ; and because we little distrust what Delights, we willingly rank them among the *Wits*. This Quality they enjoy till the Mode comes to despise and reject them, when not being able to leave off those common and vulgar Expressions, nor accustom themselves freely, and without constraint to a new Language, and another

ther kind of Delicacy, they are look'd upon as Men of the last Age.

## X.

There is another sort of *Wits*, whose principal design is not so much to get Esteem as to provoke Laughter; for a Man cannot well aim at one, without forfeiting the other. These Gentlemen are happy in good Words, they meet with lucky seasonable Sayings, Sport and Droll prettily, Rally and Jest with an Air which disposes us to Mirth. They have I know not what sort of a Talent, to extract from the meanest Subject something to amuse and divert the Company with. Which if they do with a good Grace, and happily nick the Time, Place, and Persons to whom they are agreeable, they are then pleasant Men, and at the same time facetious *Wits*. And, if they are not such every where and at all times, 'tis because we are not always dispos'd to laugh, and that Good and Evil in no Case whatsoever come nearer to one another than in Jestling and Rallery.

## XI.

I should never have done should I undertake to draw the Picture of all those who pass in the World for Men of *Wit*. For as every one Judges according to his Inclinations, I must enumerate as many sorts of them as there are different Genius's and Judgments. Besides, I find that all Men wou'd regulate *Wit*, according to their own Fancy, and likewise would have it in Perfection. Now if our Modesty will not permit us sometimes to suffer Men to tell us that we have *Wit*, tho' it pleases us never so much to be complemented with it; yet we cannot dissemble our Trouble, when they reproach and laugh at us for want of it. Therefore I shall only insist upon these four sorts of Characters, because they seem to have some ground to challenge the Reputation of *Wits*; and that in Conversation they are always supposed to have more *Wit* than others.

Yet if we look narrowly into these Things, we shall find but little ground for it, there being nothing in any of the four Characters I have drawn, which can justly entitle them to the Name of *Wits*. In the first we see nothing but a false Light,



a fallacious Glittering which strikes and seduces. In the second, nothing but a great facility of Expression, with a wonderful liberty of talking superficially of all Things, acquired and cultivated by a long Exercise and Habitude. In the third, nothing but a certain Method of Conversation got by Rote, which the *Beau Monde* by their use Authorizes, and to which the Mode for some time gives a sort of Reputation. In the fourth, we find nothing for the most part, but the foppery of a very poor creeping and cringing *Wit*, whose Capacity never carries him beyond Trifles. In all these four, or others that resemble them, (for we meet with but too many) we cannot but discover a great Emptiness, which can only please or amuse those who prefer what diverts, to what instructs them.

You will agree with me as to the Truth of this, provided 'tis not apply'd to some Persons whom you may think these Pictures fit, and for whom, perhaps, you are already prepossessed. For, if you compare what I have said of them, with their Actions and Conversation, at the same time when they act their Parts so notably, I run the danger of being disapprov'd, and then it will be very difficult for me to bring  
you



you to be of my mind. But if after the first Impression is over, you will reflect upon those Things which you thought so fine, and so ingenious, and with which you have been so sensibly pleas'd, you will return from your Surprise when ever you seriously consider it, with the same ease as you may recover from a Dream which vanishes as soon as you are well awake.

The great Point consists in examining Things narrowly and in themselves, before we pass our Judgments. There are very few Persons who will give themselves that Leisure and Trouble; and amongst those who do, the greatest part are rather guided by their Inclinations, than by Reason and Truth, and so confound obscure Notions with clear and distinct Knowledge. We ought not therefore to be astonish'd, if People are deceiv'd, and if the Error they lie under as to the Subject of *Wit* is so general.

To make it more clear and evident, having made some Remarks on what is commonly call'd *Wit*, and who those are to whom we ordinarily attribute that Quality, let us pass to the second Reflection, which I said we ought to make on that Subject, and let us see what is the Genius, or what are

are the Dispositions of Body and Mind in those sorts of Persons.

## XII.

The whole World almost is convinc'd, that Man is compos'd of two different Parts, *viz.* Soul and Body ; and I believe there are very few Men of sense who seriously make a doubt of this Difference, particularly if they have seen and perus'd those Demonstrations, which a very learned Philosopher of our Age has laid down.

Those two Substances are so strictly united during Life, and their Connexion is so great, that they communicate one to the other almost all that happens to them ; and as if they had inviolably promis'd each other this reciprocal Communication ; there is no change in the Body that the Soul is not immediately affected with, as there is none in the Soul but what is communicated at the same instant to the Body. Such is, as all the World knows, the Order of Nature, unless some Alteration in the Body hinders it.

Notwithstanding the great Intelligence that is between the Soul and the Body, yet it is not so obscure, but we may discover

cover the secret by considering separately the one and the other, and in particular, the different Springs and Wheels which are in the Body to make it act. But, because it would be to no purpose to make an intire Description here, I will slip over it in silence; supposing that those Persons to whom I speak have at least a general knowledge of the Structure of Human Bodies; and that they understand what I say when I talk of Arteries, Veins, and those Humours they contain; and what I mean when I talk of the Brain, Nerves, Fibres, and Animal Spirits, and that they also know something of their proper Functions in the Body.

This being suppos'd, and looking carefully into the diverse Characters of *Wit*, of which I have already discours'd, with relation to their Natural Temper, that is to say, to the Dispositions of their Bodies, and to the different Impressions the Motions of the Animal Spirits and the Blood cause in the Mind; 'tis easie to perceive, that all the Beauty and Excellence of their Genius is only the pure effect of Chance, and of a certain Order of the Parts of the Machine; that all is the result of an accidental Mixture of different Humours amongst themselves, and of a sort of Animal

mal Spirits, more or less fine or agitated; and very often from the great Alterations which are occasion'd in our Bodies, and consequently in our Minds, by the Air we breath, the Nourishment we receive, the Liquors we make use of, either for our Pleasure or Necessity; our Occupations, our Exercises, and in one word, all our different Ways and Methods of Life and Action.

We may imagine, for example, and we see it every day by experience, that those *Wits* that gain so much Reputation in Company by their sparkling and new Thoughts, tho' false, and by the lively Sentiments they excite in others, should have a very fine Blood, full of volatile Salt, from which are form'd the animal Spirits also very fine, and in continual motion; which passing through the Nerves, and small Fibres of the Brain, make an Impression naturally follow'd with quick and lively Sense, which never fails of animating the Speaker, and as it were by a counter-stroke the Hearers.

The Constitution we commonly call Bilious, is in my opinion, the most proper Temper for this sort of *Wits*. The Blood boils more in them, than in others, and circulates more nimbly. The different  
Fer-

Fermentations it draws from the Viscera in circulating are more efficacious and powerful. There is more volatil Salt in proportion, than other Principles. And, if besides this they observe a delicate Diet, breath a sharp Air, and use a moderate Exercise, all those Things must contribute to the Quickness of their Fancy, or ( to use the Expression in Mode ) to the Elegance of their *Wit*.

## XIII.

In like manner that other Species of *Wit*, which prepossesses us by I know not what sort of solid Discourse, well carried on and diversify'd, by a free and easie Pronunciation, and by great and wonderful Volubility and Fluentness, which seems to aim at Truth, tho' it goes astray every moment, and leads the Hearers into Error. Such *Wit* may perhaps be nothing but the Effect of a sulphureous inflamed Blood, whose particles are very proper to produce a great quantity of Animal Spirits, not only easie and ready to take fire, but also keep it in much longer; occasion'd as much by the great quantity of the matter of which they are form'd,

as by their light quality and aptness to take fire.

The Pipes of the Nerves and Brain in those Men are easily penetrated; their Fibres are supple, and their Animal Spirits pass easily through the Orifices and Pores which receive them. The Soul indeed is not in so lively a manner touch'd by the Impressions they make, as in the first sort of *Wits*; but it is fill'd enough to be intirely taken up with it, and to let it self be drawn over by continual Impressions occasion'd by that uninterrupted course of Animal Spirits, while those Impressions are made almost in the same manner in those that give ear to those great and pompous Discourses which this sort of *Wits* make use of to exprefs their Meaning.

Sulphur is the most predominant in those of this Character; as the volatil Salt is in the others. They abound in Animal Spirits and Blood; but the Ferments which are furnished by the Viscera, being not so piercing, nor the Humours so sharp, their Motions are the more moderate, and by consequence last the longer. In that very Thing therefore do's probably consist the pretended extent of *Wit* of those Men, who we only admire for want of taking notice that it is only

only the Extent of their Imagination which surprizes.

A nice and delicate Constitution, Fibres thin and fine, the Animal Spirits very light, the Blood and Humours of an indifferent Consistence, because of the Fluidity of their Parts, make, in my Opinion, those superficial vain *Wits*, which one modish Word, and affected foppish Way of Talking that humours the Times, a Phrase prettily turn'd make often pass for *Polite* and *Fine Wits*. They have not Strength enough of Mind to support them in a rational Discourse, and want both Vivacity and Penetration. but they please by I know not what kind of Air and affected Meen they use, and by a kind of unusual Language, call'd, the Language of the *Beau Monde*, that is to say, of certain Persons who have no other Title to be thought Delicate, Nice, and Polite, but because they are Effeminate.

Women being for the most part of a Constitution naturally feeble, because their Blood and Humours hold more from the Nature of Water than any other Principle, and their Brain is of a soft Consistence, because their Fibres are fine and slender, their Animal Spirits, which in Truth are agitated enough, but feeble, weak, and light, and by consequence very easily dis-



pated, come nearer this Character of *Wit* than any other : The Difficulty they have to give a serious Attention to any thing abstracted and above the Senses, the dislike they conceive for all solid Reasoning, fully proves the Delicateness of their Imagination, or, what is here much the same thing, the Weakness of their Minds.

Their Brain being easy to be mov'd by the least Agitations, and even to receive very violent Disturbances from the smallest Motions, they are in a Manner Slaves to all sensible things. They search and consider no farther than the Out-side of things, and not being able to penetrate deeper, think nothing fine but the Cloaths which cover and adorn them. As they are the best Judges of modish Carriage and Fashions, they can relish nothing but what has a Dependence on them. Some new affected way of Talking, certain Words *a la Mode*, do so infinitely please and charm them, that they cannot sufficiently applaud such as make use of them. And because the Folly of the Times countenances and protects those little foppish Turns or Expression, they place the Standard of *Wit* in them, and cannot believe any one to be an *Ass*, who has the miserable Talent to prepossess and please them in that Point.



## XV.

The Freedom and Easiness of some Men to Jest and Rally, or their Facility and Readiness of *Wit* to raise the lowest Things, and depress the highest, to contract or magnify Objects, (wherein consists what we call Burlesque) makes me believe that this sort of People cannot want Animal Spirits, both sharp and agitated, that are of Force to make particular Impressions in the Brain, with a Facility equal to the Velocity of their Motion, and that the Fibres or Humours do less obstruct or oppose their Course in the Channels they run.

The Matter which the Blood conveys to the Head to produce this sort of *Wit*, ought to be of a pretty steady Consistence, that they may have the Power freely, and without trouble, to open several Passages, by which they may form in the Brain the particular Images of what they design to represent, and dispose the rest of the Body at the same time to a Meen and Behaviour suitable to those lively Representations.

The Impression which these Animal Spirits make in the Brain being singular, the Soul is the more lively affected with the Sence of it. Jocular Men are the first

affected with it, who afterwards agreeably move others by way of Repercussion. And as it is accompany'd with Pleasure and Mirth, so it is apt to make People believe a Jocular Man Witty.

That they have Wit, I own; but it is false and childish. A quick Fancy they have, but 'tis foolish and irregular, which never represents the true Idea of Things, but on the Contrary takes a great Care to disguise and disfigure them by such peculiar Notions as make them very unnatural, and by that means more ridiculous.

I know there is one sort of Jestings and Rallery which may be allow'd by Persons of good *Wit* and *Sense*; when being neither dull nor trifling, the Effect it commonly produces is not so much to lead us from Reason and Truth, as to make us more sensible of it. But it is so very difficult to keep a rallying Imagination within its just Bounds, that one always ought to fear it will exceed them.

The Salt that ought to season and give a Relish to our Rallery imprints such Notions in the Brain as we cannot easily forget and wipe out; for they renew and increase in spite of us. 'Tis a slippery dangerous Path, and one false Step throws us from the  
the

the most nice and delicate Rallery, into the most absurd Follies.

I do not mean therefore to speak here only of those *Little Wits* who have made this false Step, who laugh and make a Jest of every Thing, and turn the most serious Things into Ridicule. A rallying *Wit* predominates in all their Discourses; which makes them give a wrong Bias to all things. As they were born with that Genius, so they die with it. This Character I look upon for this Reason to be the lowest, and meanest of all; because the Imagination of Men of this Character is so irregular and deprav'd, that it scarce ever conveys any thing to the Mind but under peculiar and borrow'd Figures, which represent only pleasant and ridiculous Fancies with which they are so infatuated, because delighted with them, that it is not in their Power to turn their Thoughts to any thing that is good and serious; they being never so pleasant, as when they say the greatest Follies.

They do not last long I confess, for we are soon weary of them. They make at last a very foolish Figure; but they reign for a time, and have their sottish Admirers. They are favourably receiv'd, and distinguish'd in the best Companies; and, which

is strange, often esteem'd beyond Men of good and solid *Judgment*.

## XVI.

I cannot exactly lay down all the particular Dispositions which concur in the forming of *Wits*, nor give you Physical Reasons of all their Differences. There are so many Kinds, that it would be as difficult for me to describe them all here, as for a Painter to draw faithfully to the Life in one Piece all the Faces which are in the World. What I can say, is, That there is one Point to which all those different *Wits* may be reduc'd, as there is one Figure in the Face to which all Faces have some likeness. This point is a certain Disposition of the Brain and the Animal Spirits, a sportive Imagination, the secret Springs and Wheels of the Machine, which I shall explain hereafter. The Mind, or rational Soul, is not concern'd in it: If it be, 'tis only for those agreeable or disagreeable Sentiments it receives, because of its Union with the Body, which Sentiments are fruitful Springs of Blindness and Error.

A Person of good and solid *Sense* may receive the same Sentiments, without falling into the same Errors. If his Imagination endeavours to mislead and seduce him, Reason,

Reason, by which he is govern'd, soon helps to undeceive him. His Reason is not free from the Illusion of the Senses. The Blood and Animal Spirits of such a Person have their Course and particular Agitations as those of other Men, and you may observe in his Body such Dispositions as may serve to explain those of his Mind. But if his Constitution does very much contribute to the Soundness of his Judgment, the good use he makes of his Reason turns the Happiness of his Constitution to a wonderful Advantage. And though some Constitutions of Body contribute equally to a sound *Judgment*, and ready *Wit*, we ought in this case to set a greater Value upon whatever proceeds from the part of *Judgment*, than what comes from that of *Wit*. My Reason is, because a Man of *Wit* follows solely his Senses, and suffers himself to be carried away by a lively Imagination; whereas a sound *Judgment* resists that Folly, in order to raise it self above it and regulate it. Therefore what I have said before is but rational, that a Man of *Wit* is only so far so, as the Constitution of his Body inclines him to it, and that it is properly the Machine only that acts in such Persons.

Make but the least Reflections on what passes in common Conversation, and you'll find sensible and notable Proofs of what I have laid down ; and Experience will convince you that what is said of the Imagination of Men of *Wit* is no Fiction of my own.

Such a one had *Wit* formerly, and was the Wonder of the Town, who now says not four witty Sentences in a Week, and those not free but forc'd. The Reason is, that those Animal Spirits which were proper to open certain Pores of the Brain are not now so brisk ; that the Matter of which they were produc'd is no more the same, or at least not so copious ; the Orifices of the Heart are sometimes straiten'd by the Nerves which encompass them, and the Blood does not circulate with the same Force and Swiftneſs as formerly. Some Passions, as for Example Sorrow, or Grief, may be the Occasion.

There are others, who still retaining their usual Strength and Vivacity of Mind, yet cannot shew it but with a strange unevenness of Temper. They have unlucky Melancholy Days, when it is apparent the Sprightliness of their *Wit* has not its wonted Heat and Lustre. And what should be the Reason of it, but some Moistness in the Brain

Brain which stifles and Quenches this Fire, some Serosity which stops the Course of the Spirits, or perhaps their being determined to run through some other Orifices, either for the Convenience and Necessity of the Machine, or some other Occasion?

If I add that the Liver, the Spleen and the other *Viscera* incessantly furnish Ferments which disorder the Mass of Blood a thousand different ways; that the Circulation is sometimes stopt, sometimes precipitated according as the Arteries and the Heart are contracted or enlarg'd; that the Brain is more or less moisten'd according to the Quantity of Serositie strain'd thro' the Glands; that the Animal Spirits are more or less abounding, gross or subtile, according to the Quantity and Quality of the Matter which goes to the Head to produce them; that there is a natural Order of the Parts, and particularly of the Fibres, which shapes the Passages through which the Spirits run with more ease than through others; if I further add, that exterior Objects and Passions make, as is well known, strange Alterations in the Body, and by a necessary Consequence very violent Impressions on the Soul. All these Considerations will help us to give a Reason for all the divers Effects of the Imagination, its Moti-



ons and Illusions will doubtless induce you to undeceive your self, and to stand upon your Guard against all its Surprises. For I declare it in one Word, what we commonly call to have *Wit*, consists in nothing but in a certain Turn of the Imagination, fantastical and singular, which the brisker and livelier it is, the more it surprizes. But, lest I should be reproach'd for making too bold a Determination, I will more exactly and strictly inquire into it, it being the Third Point that I propos'd to my self to examine.

## XVII.

Imagination counterfeit *Wit* so dexterously, that one may very easily be mistaken; and if you go no further than the Out-side, you would think it the same thing call'd by two different Names. Yet in reality they are two Things differing more in their Nature than Name; and whoever will take the Pains to consider and compare them, will find most essential Differences, as follows:

Tho' we have not a perfect Knowledge of the Nature of our Soul, we nevertheless know enough to assure us, whenever we recollect our selves, that it cannot be a part of the Body to which it is united. The



first and the sole Proprieties of the Soul are to *Think* and *Perceive* ; those of all sorts of Bodies, to be *Extended* and *Figur'd*. Now *Thought* and *Perception*, *Extent* and *Figure*, are Properties far distant in their own Natures, and such as no rational Man can conceive to be consistent in one and the same Subject.

For that very Reason every one may, in considering himself internally, know that the Soul is an immaterial Substance, uncompounded, indivisible, alone capable to know, to judge, to reason, to will, love, fear, hope, imagine and perceive, many ways and manners. He may know, I say, that as it is absolutely different from the Body, so it has Proprieties which are only agreeable to it self, independantly from the same Body ; as for example, the Proprieties of knowing, judging and willing ; but that being at present so straitly united to the Body, it has also some Proprieties depending on it, as those of *Imagination* and *Perception*.

All things that are the Objects of our Knowledge are of two sorts, either Spiritual or Material ; and as they are of two kinds in their Nature extreamly distant, so the manner by which the Soul perceives them must also be very different. For  
there

there ought to be a Proportion between the things we know and the manner of knowing them. Now Spiritual Things cannot be known but abstractedly. God, for example, our own Thoughts, general and universal Ideas, our Will, Inclinations, Judgments, Truth, Justice, Perfection, Reason, are Things only known by the Soul, without the help of the Senses. But as for Material Things, the Soul cannot perceive them but in a sensible and gross manner; viz. either by the Impression they make on the Senses, which is call'd *Perception*, or by the Images it forms of them in the Brain which is called *Imagination*.

## XVIII.

I shall not make it my business to prove all these Things Philosophically, which have been already confirm'd by very good Authors. Those that have a further curiosity, may see the Demonstrations they have given, in those Books they have written on this Subject. 'Tis sufficient for me to observe what is proper to the Body alone, what to the Soul only, and what concerns the Soul and Body jointly; that the great Difference between those Things being made plain to us, we may not confound them.

Part I. *in Conversation.* 37

In effect what do we see as to the Body we animate, but divers sorts of Parts, solid and liquid, subtile and gross, which by their singular Order and different Figures, make a compound susceptible of diverse Motions?

But, as to the Soul, without admitting any extent or division of Parts, we discover a Substance, a Being, which thinks, knows, wills, and determines its self.

Taking afterwards the Soul and Body together, we may observe, that if among our different sorts of Knowledge we have any without the help of the Body, there are some also that we have only by its means; that some things there are which the Soul immediately and by it self knows without any relation to the Body; but that there are other Things which it does not know but by relation to it.

I call the first manner of knowing, *Understanding*, and *Knowledge*; the second, *Sentiment* and *Imagination*.

Sentiment is a Perception of the Soul, which is afterwards produc'd from the Action of the Outward Objects of the Body, and the Agitation of the Nerves and Spirits which extends its self to a certain part of the Brain. Imagination is a Perception of the Soul, not caus'd by an impression.

pression made upon the Body by the Action of exterior Objects, but by the Agitation of the interiour Fibres of the Brain, produc'd by the interiour Motion of the Animal Spirits; whether it is because this Agitation proceeds from the very Will it self of the Soul, or only from an unexpected Course of the Spirits, which pass accidentally through certain Pores rather than others.

So that this manner of thinking which we call *Imagining*, to speak properly, consists only in the interiour Application of the Mind, to the Descriptions or Images drawn or imprinted in our Brain by the Action of the Animal Spirits.

And on the contrary, that manner of Thinking which we call *Conceiving*, consists only in the application of the Mind, to pure and intelligible Ideas, separated from all sensible Impressions and corporeal Images.

As for example, when I think of certain Numbers, as 2, 4, 8. the Ideas I have of them I perceive by the Mind alone, and that only Propriety of the Soul which I call Understanding. I judge also of the Relation which is between those Ideas, as that 4 is the half of 8, and the double of 2, without the help of any Sense or Image.

Yet

Yet if I cast my Eyes on the Character 4, which was invented to express the Idea of this Number; the impression that will then be made on my Eyes by that Figure, and by the Optick Nerves in my Brain, will cause a sentiment in the Soul, and make the intelligible Idea which I have of this Number 4 sensible. Thus in what I shall conceive, there will be both Sentiment and Idea.

If when I think upon the Number 4 I do not stop at the meer Idea I have of it, but apply my Mind to the Description or Image the Animal Spirits imprint in my Brain, and which represent this Figure 4, tho' no more before my Eyes, than I imagine. So that I both Conceive and Imagine.

But it will be also of importance to observe, that neither the Sentiment I receive by the Colour and Figure of this Character, nor the Image I have of it in my Brain, make the Idea of the Number to which I joyn them more distinct, tho' causing a deeper Impression; nor do they consequently render the judgments and Conclusions I shall draw from this Idea more rational or more coherent. On the contrary, I shall make it appear, that the Senses and Imagination very often darken

ken our Light, and spoil our Understanding.

## XIX.

Let us take another Example less abstracted ; if I think of a Square, the Idea I have of it shews me four sides joyn'd by their Extreame. I need only the light of the Mind to see it, and also to hold, if I please, several Arguments on the Proprieties I discover in this Idea.

To join the Sentiment to the Idea, I need only draw with my Pen on this Paper four Lines that shall meet at their four ends. □

The white and black of this Figure, strike my Eyes, move the filaments of the Nerves and the Animal Spirits ; and my Soul immediately receives a Sentiment, which answers to the motion of the Fibres of the Brain. There is the intelligible Idea made sensible.

To imagine this Square, when I have no Figure like it before my Eyes, I need only turn my Mind towards my Body, and apply it to the Image which the Animal Spirits shall imprint of it in my Brain. Then I shall imagine a Square which before I did but conceive, that is to say, I shall not only see this Square as a Figure terminated by four

four Sides and four Lines; but I shall consider those four Lines as present by the force and application of my Mind; with this difference only, that the pure Idea render'd as it were palpable and sensible, will then affect and move me, whereas before it did only shew it self. This Sensation will support, if you will, the Idea and Arguments I shall make on those Proprieties; but will not augment my Knowledge; On the contrary, it may happen, that being taken up with the Image or Sentiment, and not at all with the pure Idea, I may stop at first sight at one, and stray altogether from the other.

## XX.

To make this clearer by more familiar instances, let us suppose that I read, or hear pronounc'd one or more words join'd together; as for example this Italian Proverb; *Dove' e Amore, quivi e Fede*, where Love is, there is Fidelity. What I presently find, is, that the sound of those words pronounc'd strikes my Ears, as the reading the Characters of the same words strike my Eyes; and from which side soever these Impressions come, 'tis certain that the motion of the Nerves which extends it self to the principal part of the Brain, produces a  
Sentiment



Sentiment in the Soul which stirs up the Idea which Men have agreed to fasten to those Terms. For it depends on them to fix the Ideas they have of Things, to such and such Sounds, and to such and such Characters rather than to others, as they please. Thus in what I apprehend by hearing those words ; *where Love is , there is Fidelity*, there is Sentiment and pure Idea.

But the Imagination may be said here to have some Part in it ; if considering those Ideas which I have of *Love*, and *Fidelity*, I find my self so us'd to see those Ideas joyn'd to the Impressior that the Sound or the Character c. the Terms which express them have often form'd in our Brain, that I cannot easily represent them separately, to my self, as very seldom we can, and that I apply my self to the Expressions as soon as to the Things signifi'd by them ; for then those pure Ideas will become sensible, because of the Connexion that is between Them and the Impression of the Terms to which they are joyn'd. This Union becomes so close by our being us'd to see them so united, that we cannot sometimes think of the Idea without imagining the Expression, nor imagine the Expression without reviving the Idea.

This



This should not make us believe that the Sounds or Characters produce in the Brain, Impressions and Images which resemble in any thing the Ideas we conceive when we reflect on those Impressions. The truth is, they are so straitly united by our being accustomed to see them in this Union, that one would think they do but one and the same thing, and that to *Conceive* and *Imagine* is but one and the same manner of *Thinking*.

## XXI.

Far from confounding the Impressions made in the Brain with the Ideas which offer themselves to the Mind, we cannot so much as say there is any Resemblance betwixt them; since altogether different Words and Characters make us understand the same Things. As for example, when I hear pronounc'd by one that speaks Italian these Words, *Amore, Fede*, those Terms immediately awake in my Mind the same Ideas as these other Words pronounc'd in English, *Love, Fidelity*, which signify the same thing, tho' the Sound is very different, and by consequence the Impression made of it in my Brain.

Not

Not only different Words may explain the same Things, but different Things may be explain'd by the same Words and Characters. Thus, if a Man who talks Latin pronounces in my Presence this Word *Cor*, I shall immediately understand by this Word the Heart, one of the noble Parts of the Body; but if another should pronounce it who talks French, I shall think he means a hunting Instrument call'd a Horn, which are two different things express'd by the same Sound and Characters, which by consequence can only produce the same Motion and the same Impression in my Brain, although they produce different Ideas in the Soul.

By this we see that the Union of Images and pure Ideas we have of Things is every way Arbitrary, and there being no essential Relation between one and the other, the Motion of the Spirits and the Impression of the Brain can at the most but serve to awake in us the Things, \* not produce them, to apply our Mind to those very same Things,

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\* I do not here pretend to explain from whence we have our Ideas of things, from whence they proceed, nor how they are form'd; because 'tis nothing to my Subject. I shall only endeavour to shew, that the Senses and Imagination do not produce them, and cannot enlighten us.

not to form them. Whence it manifestly follows, that whenever we proceed to pass Judgment without considering narrowly those Ideas, or going no farther than our Sensations and Fancies, our Inferences are false and rash, and that so much the more as those Fancies and Sensations are more quick and lively, by Reason that the Motion of the Spirits being more violent, the Impression of the Brain deeper, and the Images better drawn, the Soul cannot but be more possess'd by them. And as we are naturally taken up with what pleases us, the Application of the Soul will be much greater towards its Sensations and Fancies, than its Attention to the true Idea of things which appear before it, but make no Impression. The Soul may be so sensibly touch'd, that it may wander and stray, and erring from the clear Light of Reason, it shall give it self wholly up to the Obscurity of its Sentiments, or the Illusions of its Imagination, which, as I have said, may employ the Soul, but can discover nothing to it; may bring it out to behold, but can shew it nothing.

This may seem to some Men too serious, if not an insipid Discourse. However 'tis allowable, to explain a Subject upon which I could determine nothing without these previous

previous Reflections, unless I should fall into the Weakness of our *Modern VVits*, and pretend to dispute without Grounds, or persuade without Reason.

## XXII.

Imagination then is far different from Wit, that is to say, from Reason and good Sense; for those three Terms express one and the same Thing; and *VVit*, which is nothing but Imagination, is by consequence far different from the solid true *Judgment* which it counterfeits. But let it be never so well metamorphos'd, as it does but mimic and cheat in Appearance, it falls far short of excelling it.

All the Fault lies in those who are mistaken in it; for a Man of *Judgment* understands the Things he considers and judges of, by applying himself to the Spiritual Ideas he has of them, not in the least by the Application of them to Corporeal Images in the Fancy, in which their Fault lies. For those sensible Images representing all Things confusedly, it follows of course that the Imagination never has a clear Insight into Things. The Mind considers the true Idea of Objects, to find their Difference and Proprieties; when the Fancy does but reflect

reflect upon the Impression made of them in the Brain.

Thence it comes that a Man of *Judgment* fixes upon those just and solid Grounds that confirm his Thoughts ; whereas a *Wit* minds nothing but the agreeable or disagreeable Sentiment which follow them. A Man of *Judgment* diffuses his Knowledge, by instructing such as receive it ; but a *Wit*, with his Notions, surprises and cheats his Hearers. The former persuades, because he talks rationally ; and a *Wit*, because he flatters.

A Man of *Judgment* begins first by gaining the Reason, and by that means very often the Hearts ; but the business of a *Wit* is first to possess the Heart, and by that means debauch the Weak and Simple. In short, a Man of *Judgment* minds nothing but Truth and Knowledge ; and a *Wit* pleases himself only with Opinions and Probabilities.

Now because Opinion has most commonly the Preference, and that we for the most part take Appearances of Truth for Truth it self, what proceeds from the Imagination is supposed to come from the Mind, and we confound without any Reflection the one with the other. Our *Wits*, who only follow their Imaginations, cunningly

ningly give an imposing Air of Truth to Opinions and Appearances of Truth ; and even to things the most distant from Reason, a seducing Appearance of Reason. We are dazzled with their fine Discourses, and harmonious gingling of Words , and charm'd by the Delicacy or Novelty of their sparkling Thoughts. We take an *Ignis fatuus* for a true Light, Visions for Realities, and think our selves reasonably perswaded and convinc'd, when we are but agreeably tickled and flatter'd.

## XXIII.

I have already given the Reason of this Mistake. Humane Pride, Pleasure, and the Inclination and Propensity we have to any thing that flatters us, are the true Occasions of it. When a *Wit* undertakes to discourse on any Subject in Conversation, the sensible Impression of the natural Force of his Imagination gives him a secret Confidence, which makes him gratify his Ideas whatever they are, true or false, proper or improper. This Vanity does not suffer him to distrust himself a Moment, but he reduces all to it ; and, because one would not willingly be deceiv'd, he forms to himself a certain Scheme of Reason, from whence all the Illusions of his Will proceed as from their Source and Fountain.

With

With this false Confidence of himself he discourses of every thing, boldly decides the most obscure, and undertakes to unfold the most intricate Matters ; and, as he observes some Order in his Discourse, so one would think him a Master of the Argument. Because he imagines well, we are apt to think he argues solidly.

There is nothing so common as this Mistake in humane Society, more especially in Questions which are sometimes propos'd on divers Subjects by way of Conversation. While some Men, having both Truth and Reason on their side, can scarce be heard, and much less believ'd. Others who have the knack of managing neatly the Matter presently gain Belief, not by the Strength of Reason, but by a certain Turn which they give their Thoughts.

The Pleasure we take in the Conversation of a *Wit* does in some Manner inflave our Minds to him ; and our Reason weaken'd by that sensible Impression, yields to its Power while it secretly owns the prevailing Advantage of the Imagination, by its agreeable Motions. Not, but that a good Air, and good Grace do extreamly set off whatever we do or speak, tho' they do not really make what we say to be truer, or what we do to be more rational.

D

Appear-



Appearances are nothing but Cheats, as well in respect to Wit as to the Heart, tho' less distrusted. A civil, handsom, sober Man, who presents himself with a good Grace, is presently well receiv'd, and we conceive some esteem for him; but one would not be oblig'd on those Appearances, to answer for his Integrity. On the contrary we are apt at first sight to proclaim that Man a Wit, who talks well, lively, briskly and agreeably, even before we have had time enough to judge whether he has as much in Effect, as he has in Appearance.

## XXIV.

But some Men will say, is it a Defect to have Wit? to have it quick, polite, and agreeable? to have a fine, noble, delicate Fancy? Is it for nothing it was given us adorn'd with so many Graces? and must we scrupulously deny our selves the use of it? Is it a Sin to be sensible of its Charms? and shall People make us believe that to divert and please is a pernicious Qualification? Is it not rather one of those Things of which *Seneca* speaks, that is, only cried down and exclaim'd against, by such as want it? or, as *Pliny* says, one of those Things of which we talk with Passion, because we look upon it with Envy?

Having



Having thus explain'd my self on the Nature of Imagination, and the Differences of *Wit* and *Judgment*, 'tis now incumbent upon me to declare what their Use is.

Whatever is serviceable may prove hurtful, and there is nothing so pernicious but may be made beneficial, when 'tis put to a good Use; I speak only of Natural Things. Poyson being well prepar'd becomes a Sovereign Remedy. I do not intend to cry down Imagination in all respects. It may indeed deceive a *Man of Judgment*: Sometimes it imposes on him, and leads him out of the way; but this happens only, when he shamefully abandons his Reason, which alone ought to be the Guide of his Knowledge and Judgment; when he neglects his Reason so far as to despise it, to follow only Visions and Chymera's.

Let us give to every Thing its due Merit and Place. *Judgment* ought to have the Precedence; *Wit*, or *Imagination*, ought to come after. Imagination must not have the Pre-eminence; but should follow as an Assistant to our Weakness, and to support us in the painful Labour of Attention to the true Idea of Things, so as to obtain a perfect Knowledge of them.

This Assistance is at present necessary for us, because the Body over-powers the

Mind ; and we must make a Vertue of Necessity, and extract from the Body what may raise us above it. We ought to help our selves with sensible Ideas, as real Assistants in the Consideration of Spiritual Ideas. The Sensations being Modifications of the Soul which touch and penetrate it, must of necessity affect it much more than abstracted Ideas, which only appear without touching it.

The Mind faints and languishes at the bare Description of Truths ; and is often discourag'd by the Trouble and Pain it takes in the Discovery of them. Whereas the Imagination revives and diverts it, fixes, supports, and cherishes its Thoughts, makes obscure things sensible to it, approaches the Distant, and brings them to its Touch. It polishes the gross Ideas, gives a Substance to the most subtle and airy ; and the Soul apply'd to the divers Notions which are neatly and distinctly ingraven in the Brain, more easily perceives what would have been otherwise beyond its reach.

The quickest and most penetrating Minds stand in need of this Assistance ; and there is none that can act without it, as long as it is join'd with the Body. 'Tis an unhappy but indispensable Necessity, because of the Dependence we have on sensible Things in this Life.

'Tis

'Tis not then a Defect, absolutely speaking, to have a strong, quick, and fine Imagination ; since it is of so great a help to Reason. But 'tis a very great Fault to pervert the Order of Nature, to make Reason wait upon Imagination, to prefer and delight only in this, and, by a shameful Injustice, carry it as it were in Triumph, and place it in the Seat of Reason, which we almost intirely darken and eclipse.

Imagination makes in one sense the Finess, the Delicacy, and the Force of Wit ; but 'tis only when it obeys the Orders of Reason. On the contrary, where it predominates we may impute all our Miscarriages to it. That is, when the divers Impressions which are made in the Brain and the rest of the Body, are only made by its Orders ; when the Images which are form'd in the Fancy, are drawn and expung'd at its Pleasure ; when it receives no Laws but from it self, in all its impetuous and irregular Motions. In this last sense I affirm that 'tis a great Defect to have Wit ; and a very vicious Quality to please no other way. A Quality we ought not in the least to be fond of, it being rather to be fear'd than covered ; and if we speak of it contemptibly, 'tis because we behold it without Envy. The pretended Charms of the Imagi-

nation, the Delicacy and Graces of *Wit* are so many Snares laid for us; and we cannot too much distrust them, particularly in Conversation, where we are so much the more easily surpriz'd, because we have less time to think, and less Liberty to defend our selves.

I come now to those Reflections which still remain to be made on the Subject of *Stupidity*, having made those which I propos'd to my self on the Subject of *Wit*.

## XXV.

This Term *Stupidity* seems to me no less equivocal than that of *Wit*. We either extend, or confine it more than we ought. Men being for the most part taken up with the obscure and confus'd Ideas they have of Things, they content themselves with the undeterminate and general Terms which express them; without troubling themselves to define them in particular. Thus, what difference soever there be between an *Honest Man* and an *Honest Man*, a *Man of Wit* and a *Man of Wit*, a *Stupid* and a *Stupid Man*, 'tis always to them the same Thing; and those Distinctions so nice and useful pass with them for nothing else but Trilles, which deserve not to be taken notice of.

To

To shew you however how important those Differences are to such as will not venture to discourse at random, 'tis but considering that all Qualities, whatsoever they be, are different according to the Genius of those who enjoy them; that the Diversity of the Genius proceeds partly from the Difference of the Constitution, Humour and Education; and as those Things change, so the Genius and Qualities of the Mind take different Forms.

'Tis for this Reason that Vice or Vertue in some Persons, has something very singular which distinguishes it from the same Species of Vice and Vertue in others. One would think their Qualities acquire a particular Character which separate them from all others by the Disposition of the Mind of those which have them. They retain the same Name and general Resemblance, and yet are not the same. We are apt to mistake in it, because very often we have but one and the same Term to express very different Things; which makes us confound them. The Terms of *Stupidity* or *Folly* serve to denote the different Dispositions of Mind in two Persons which pass for *Block-heads* or *Fools*. Nevertheless the *Stupidity* of the one is nothing near the same with that of the other.

This Term may give very different Ideas, and we are almost sure to be mistaken by it, if we take Things literally.

Thence it often happens, that for want of knowing what we say, we commend instead of blaming, and that our Elogies prove bitter Invectives. He that talks thus without knowing what he says, whether he praises or dispraises, rather shews the Disposition of his Heart than the Light of his Understanding; and we have sometimes more Reason than we imagine, to attribute the Good or the Ill which People say of us, to the Goodness or Malice of those who say it, rather than to their Knowledge; tho' they hit upon the truth. For really few Men understand either what is Good or what is Evil in it self, and know nothing of it but what is suggested by the present Disposition of their Hearts to which they ascribe every thing. A Man may sometimes pass for a *Great Wit*, who at another time shall be thought a *Sot*, if those Persons come to alter their Opinion who once thought him a *Wit*. We give way to the Passions and Motions of our Heart; but as for Truth, we suffer our selves to be led away from it by such giddy Notions as make us unsteady, for want of making the just differences that fix and determine the Mind.

I ob-

I observe three different Sorts among those we call, or that may be call'd *Stupid*. Some appear to be such, but are so in reality; some seem to be such and yet are not; others in some degree are *Stupid*, without appearing to be such.

All the World agrees, that *Stupidity*, taking this Word in general, is nothing but a Coarseness and heaviness of Mind. The natural Slowness of some Mens Actions and Discourses makes them justly pass for *Stupid*, and their Insensibility in most Things deserves such a Judgment to be pass'd upon them. Enervated by the love of Ease, which their Laziness makes them so desirous of, they fly from all Business; frighted by the Fear which their meanness of Spirit inspires, they decline all Undertakings; and are as difficult to be mov'd, as they are apt to leave off when in Action.

They never penetrate into what one says nor conceive it without a great deal of trouble. Their mean Notions, attended by gross and forc'd Expressions, banish them from all Commerce and humane Society. They never enter into Conversation but the Disgust they create in others, and the Distaste they have of themselves, soon bring them back to that obscure Idleness they prefer before all Things.



A *Wit* is one that sparkles in his Discourse, and makes a mighty noise by the vivacity of his Imagination. Whereas the *Stupid*, being both Dull and Dumb, can neither speak nor answer; his Brain with much ado receiving the weak Impressions of the heavy and pusillanimous Animal Spirits, produc'd in little quantity from a gross thick Blood, which circulates but slowly and is, consequently never refin'd enough. The several Ferments which the Viscera prepare are more proper to coagulate, than thin it; and the Nerves being wholly fill'd with those dull and weak Animal Spirits, want the just Bent which is necessary for them to serve as Organs to the Natural Sense and Motions. Which Motions being consequently but slack, the Impressions which the Soul receives from them are accordingly the weaker, the Designs shallower, the Genius poorer, and the Person more *Stupid*.

## XXVI.

The second Sort is of those who seem to be *Stupid*, and are not. The Error which most Men lie under on their account is for the most part occasion'd by their saying Little, or their talking Ill; by their being too silent, or using improper Expressions.

They



They who talk little and seldom do neither move nor delight the Hearers. They who express themselves ill, offend and trouble them. Neither the one nor the other inspire agreeable Thoughts, or give any satisfaction; far therefore from passing for Men of Wit, they rather go for Block-heads amongst certain People. Yet we may be mistaken in it; for tho' Silence be sometimes a mark of Stupidity, yet it may proceed from several other Causes. In \* some 'tis a sign of Timidity, in others a token of Modesty, in some others an effect of Distrust, and upon some Occasions it is taken for an Evidence of Conviction. But very often 'tis neither Stupidity, nor Conviction, Distrust, nor Modesty; but rather Prudence and good Sense, that obliges us to Silence, when we find that the good Things we would say will not be well relish'd, and those we converse with are not dispos'd to receive them. For we ought not to use our Rhetoric at all times, and before all sorts of Persons.

Such a Silence is very judicious, and shows a great deal of Sense in those who forbear

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\* *Uterius enim tacere, dissimule signum est, non modestie ratio.*

talking for that Reason. Their Eyes are their Orators ; the Air or Gravity of their Countenance, which attends the wise management of their Words, does sufficiently discover the Solidity of their Thoughts ; and is so much the juster reproach to our frothy superficial *Wits*, that are not disposed to receive them, as this Air is grounded on a modest Discretion, not Insolence.

We are no less deceiv'd in the Judgment we make on those Men which pass for *Stupid*, or at least for People of indifferent Parts, because of the difficulty they lie under to express themselves. They have very often the same Thoughts a *Wit* may have on the same Subject ; and all the Difference is, that a *Wit* utters them with Freedom and Ease, whereas the other does it but weakly and with trouble. The one rich in fine Terms, neither stops nor hesitates in Conversation ; the other, poor in Expressions, but rich in Thoughts, confounds himself when he talks, and often is forced to give off. Yet if he does chance to utter his Notions, tho' with never so many blunders, we plainly see through the Confusion of his Words, what there is in his Thoughts ; and that the good Things he thus express'd with Confusion, would have been Charming and excellent, if they had

had been deliver'd in polite neat Expressions.

Let us not deceive our selves; those who talk ill are very often such as have the best Thoughts. The Confusion which appears in their Discourse proceeds wholly from the justness of their Notions. They think too well, to discourse so well, and are only perplex'd, because they do not find the force of common Expressions comes up to the loftiness of their Notions, these being too noble for their Expressions, or their Expressions too mean for their Notions. Their Want of Uniformity hinders their Coherence, and the search they make after more noble Expressions, very often leads them from that plain natural Stile which is most pleasing to the Mind. As they are confin'd within the bounds of a Language; which to their Fancy is not full enough, 'tis impossible but their Discourse must betray constraint. They are too solid in their Thoughts, and for that very Reason, too much cramp'd in their Expressions.

On the contrary the fine *Talkers* do not always utter the best Things. Their Ideas are very often as weak, as their Expressions are delicate; and this great facility of Expression is sometimes a sensible Sign of the poorness of their Genius. As they comprehend

prehend Little, and never dive into the bottom of Things, so they never want Words to express their few Conceptions. They have more than is requisite, and 'twere to be wish'd they were not so fluent; for as they have the Skill to make their Expressions easie and agreeable, so they make a false Eloquence their chief Business. They talk for the pure sake of talking, and very often utter Things of no weight: Which is enough for them, because their feeble Ideas are soon unravell'd; and there needs no great Efforts for so trifling a business. But a *Man of Judgment* cannot be satisfied with the emptiness he finds under a fine Superficies. On the contrary he is often disgusted, for not finding the good Things he in vain search'd after under those appearances.

If we judge of it by the Outside only, we are apt to mistake grossly in those two Characters of *Wit*. The one is thought Sprightly, because it easily discovers it self, and under agreeable appearances, the other is condemn'd as *Stupid*, because it cannot shew it self with ease, and sprightliness. But in the bottom this does not fall short of the other; since a *Wit* of this Character may have at least as strong an Imagination, and perhaps more regular. His Brain is  
very

very likely of as good a Constitution, and his Animal Spirits have their requisite Qualities in a sufficient Quantity. But he has the misfortune not to be able to turn or dispose those Spirits towards those Parts of the Brain where they ought to run to find the strong Expressions he stands in need of. And, had he that Power, he would turn them perhaps to no purpose, because the order of the Fibres of his Brain would be found so made in those Parts, that the Spirits cannot make a free Passage, nor beat themselves easie Paths. For which Reason when they are push'd and press'd, they are oblig'd, either to make some Effort to force the Obstacles, or to turn and seek some other Passages. This puts all into disorder, and causes a Confusion, which seems to be in the Mind and Imagination, tho' in effect very often in the Words and Discourse.

## XXVIII.

If those Persons seem to be *Stupid* and are not so, there are others, without appearing to be so, come extreamly near it.

These are not so silent as the others. They talk when they find an Opportunity, and also express themselves fluently and with ease; but whatever they say, or discourse

course of, they only report what they have read or heard, and produce nothing of their own. They say nothing here but what they have heard elsewhere, and as they easily retain what they hear, they repeat a hundred times the same things, if they find as many Opportunities. They tire those who have the Patience to hear them, and would be much concern'd should they omit the least Circumstance. They deliver every Thing as they learn'd it, even the most frivolous and useless; as careful to remember Trifles, as incapable of remarking good Things.

We are seldom deceiv'd in them; for being tiresom and tedious 'tis impossible they should be list'd among the *Wits*. To their good Memory they owe the Quality of *Stupid* by which they may be denominated, because in Effect they are so in some degree, and make a Species of them.

An ancient *Grecian* has with Reason lookt upon an intire Defect of Memory to be a Sign of *Stupidity*. Had he but turn'd his Eyes on the opposite side, he would have perhaps remark'd, that there is also a kind of *Stupidity* which nearly follows too good a Memory. If some Men be so *Stupid* as to forget every Thing, there are others no less *Stupid*, for retaining all they read or hear.

hear. If the Memory fails in those, it is so full and so present to these, that it leaves them not the Liberty to think of what they ought, nor sometimes of what they wou'd. Which may pass under the Notion of *Stupidity*.

To make this clearer, I find my self oblig'd to give my Sentiments on the Subject of Memory, and to speak of its Effects and Uses. Which will not be altogether incongruous, because erroneously Men often give it the Title of *Wit*, tho' it has nothing which renders it worthy of that Honour.

## XXIX.

Experience proves a good Memory and sound Judgment to be almost inconsistent; and that those who are so very happy in their Memory, are not very often so in their *Judgments*.

Reason also agrees with Experience in this, and will not suffer us to doubt of this Truth; for 'tis certain that to judge well, we must know the Thing we would judge of, that we must by consequence examine it; see what is proper and suitable to it, and what is not, compare it with those Things to which it may have some Relation, to discover in what it resembles, and wherein it differs from them.

But



But to be capable of doing this, we must be in a Condition to perceive the Ideas which answer to the Things we examine. We must have a sufficient Capacity of Mind, to comprehend several Things at the same time; and not be encumber'd by others which have no relation to them. We must be able to turn and wind them on every side, and behold them in every Form. In a word, we ought to have the Mind Free, and the Judgment Sound. Now this Freedom of Mind and Soundness of Judgment, is not to be found in those who have so excellent and so good a Memory.

They have their Brain so dispos'd, as to receive profound Impressions of Things that please it; and those Impressions do not easily wear out. Their Animal Spirits are strong enough, and sufficiently agitated to make those Impressions; and their Constitution of Brain is proper to preserve them, when once made. These Spirits make themselves free Passages in the Brain, and pass very often without interrupting their Course. The very Impressions form'd by the Course of these Spirits are made in great Number in a very little time, so far from confounding each other, that on the contrary they join together with a kind of Order and a certain Disposition of Parts. Then,  
by



by the Union of the Soul and the Body, which is as admirable as 'tis incomprehensible, the Mind receives the Ideas of Things which answer to those Impressions ; it sees, and is pleas'd with them. They even present themselves to it in the same Order that the Impressions imprinted in the Brain preserve. And, because those Impressions are deep and not easily raz'd out, and that the Animal Spirits may run into it several times without hindrance, the Ideas which answer to it ought also to return and present themselves very often at several times. Herein we may make the Memory to consist, which is esteem'd so much the more happy, as it preserves whatever is committed to it, and the more faithfully it represents it as Occasion serves.

## XXX.

But, if we consider the narrow Bounds and small Extent of our Understanding, how large soever our Vanity makes them, we may easily perceive, that a Man whose Brain freely receives strong Impressions he a long time preserves, is not really in a Condition to receive any of those which are as soon effac'd as made, to make room for others ready to follow them, and which must also yield their Place to new ones when they

they come, to the end that the Mind attentive, as I have said, to different Ideas, at the same time those different Impressions are made, may see them as it were pass by successively, to know which it ought to join, and which it ought to separate ; or which is much the same Thing, to judge of them as well as of the Things they represent.

He will, I say, find it very difficult, if he has made some use of his Memory, to banish from his Mind a mighty Number of Ideas it crowds in upon him, to apply himself solely to those he ought to consider. There will always intervene either false or different ones from the Subject, that will go near to disturb him, and which mixing unseasonably with the first, will break all his Designs, and take from him the Liberty of Judgment, by the Confusion they'll occasion in his Mind.

Does it not sometimes happen, that a Word read or suggested, puts us upon a Discourse we had utterly forgot ? that we remember a proper Name difficult to recall, by only seeing the first Syllable ? that one Feature of a Man's Face brings afresh into our Minds another which resembles it ? 'tis but determining for that the Animal Spirits to some Motion ; which of themselves take that Course which is most easy unto them ;

them ; and so dispose our Mind to follow them, and fix upon the Ideas they discover to it.

The same Thing happens to Men of too good a Memory, almost upon all Occasions of Discourse and Conversation. They have no sooner cast their Eyes upon one Thing, but their Memory represents to them another, which because it has some Likeness with the first, is not however the Thing in question ; and not having at that instant the free Liberty of discerning, they suffer themselves to be drawn whither the Animal Spirits take their unexpected Course. Which being more free and easy that way than any other, become so rapid, that in vain would they endeavour to retain them, should they perceive their Error. Thus always interrupted and rambling, they never come to the Point. Their Judgments are false, and Arguments imperfect. Attention so necessary to all Men to inform themselves of Things, and comprehend what they are, very often serves but to make them more obscure, in disposing their Minds to Error and Falshood, and so leading their Thoughts from the Subject in hand.

For a Proof of my Assertion, I need no other Instance, but such Men as have taken more Care to cultivate their Memories than  
their

their Minds. 'Tis very usual with them when they talk, to fill their Conversation with Stories and Relations, which being pleasantly turn'd engages the Minds of the Hearers, and makes them lose the natural Connexion of the Discourse, or so changes the Order of it, that it is no more the same. 'Tis in vain for one to expect they should resume the Thread of their Subject, who do not so much as think on't, because, supported by their Memory, they have no sooner finish'd one Story, but they endeavour to crowd in another, which immediately leads them to a third, if they find the Company in the least dispos'd to hear them. For those Gentlemen have never done, and yet do not answer the Intent. But, if they seem to touch again at what was first propos'd, 'tis but *en passant*. As little able to Judge, as excellent at Reciting, they do not Argue, or else they Argue very ill; and amuse you only with Tales and Absurdities. This is that which I think I may call one Species of *Stupidity*, and to be really *Stupid* in some manner, without appearing to be so.

## XXXI.

What hinders Men the most from seeing this Defect, is a certain Education too common

mon in the World, even amongst those who think themselves the most Ingenious. They are more addicted to read than make Reflections, and particularly to read those Books which please and delight more than Instruct. They form to themselves a fine Idea of Knowledge and Learning, by endeavouring to read every Thing, and to retain all they read, but principally those things which may serve to please or distinguish them in Company, as Poetry, History, great Exploits, Genealogies, witty Jest, and the like, for in reality, those Things infinitely please, and though very often they do not distinguish the useful from the useless part of them, provided they take a proper time to recite them, they may hope to gain the Minds of most Men, to prepossess them, and by this means obtain their Esteem. So that if a natural Disposition draws Men of good Memory into the aforesaid Errors, the Pleasure they find, and the Pride they take in them does not a little contribute to confirm 'em therein. And we are not surpris'd, that even those who have not this Gift of Nature, endeavour to cultivate their Memory to the Prejudice of their Mind, and fill it with a vast Number of Facts heap'd the one upon the other, to use upon Occasion to gain the Admiration  
of

of those who highly applaud a good Memory, and are delighted with Narrations.

I do not here examine whence it happens, that we are more willing to hear those who relate a Story, than those who argue or discuss a Point, and that our conversation runs most upon Recitals. But I well know that by this very Thing Men of good Memories are distinguish'd, and that they set too great a Value upon themselves for it. They discourse when others are oblig'd to be silent; and all the Company turns and listens to them. They are the only Men taken notice of; 'tis not civil to interrupt 'em, but a sign of Folly and Levity not to be attentive; and we constantly extol and praise them. How can they choose but be pleas'd? and why should not others endeavour to excell the same way? They gain the Hearts and Minds, and are reckon'd ingenious Men, in spite of good Sense, as also of those who have a greater Esteem for it than Memory. 'Tis such an Allurement to the intirely cherishing of this, and abandoning the other, that they render themselves incapable of making a right Use of it.

A good Memory, I must confess, is a mighty Help, and such as deserves to be rank'd amongst the good Qualifications of an

an ingenious Man. There are a Thousand Occasions where we can do nothing without it; it being not only advantageous to us; but also absolutely necessary. The Mischief is, that we can scarce enjoy this Quality, but we in some manner neglect the *Judgment*, which is, much more preferable. Let Men then if they please study the Perfection of their Memory, I consent to it, provided they take more care of their Minds; let 'em exercise that, provided they make more use of this. Happy are they who have a just regard both for the one and the other. But, by way of Caution, if one minds it well, 'tis infinitely better to render one's self capable of judging, than remembring well; and I hold it for a certain Maxim, that good Sense may in some Occasions supply the want of Memory; whereas the extraordinary Talent of Remembring cannot on any Occasion supply the want of good Sense.

## XXXII.

Imagination, as I have made it appear, is not that which makes a *Man of Judgment*. 'Tis plain Memory does it less. We then unjustly give them that fine Title; and 'tis in vain the *Wit* extols and glorifies its self for the same, for since all the pretended Excellency



cellency of his Genius consists wholly in these two Faculties, he ought to confine himself there, and not attribute to himself what belongs not to him, nor give himself out for what he is not. Yet we must allow this to most Men's Shame, that if a *Wit* deceives and imposes on us in Conversation, 'tis as much occasion'd by the Prepossession of the Hearers, as by the Talent of the Speaker, who being flatter'd (as has been already observ'd) with a secret Pride, as the Hearers are drawn away by a sensible Pleasure, are both mistaken, tho' they touch one another unseen. They wish for one another's Company, and none are more joyful than they when together, because of the Pleasure they reciprocally afford to each other, not for any Light or Instructions they communicate.

I do not pretend by this to change familiar Discourses and common Conversation into Philosophical Conferences, or Schools of Learning. Any thing that favours of Instruction is offensive in Conversation, and nothing appears so insupportable in it as the Liberty some People take of prescribing Rules to all the World. I pity such as fall under the hands of Men, who with the Air of a School-Master will undertake to teach them. We must break off, and

fly



fly the Conversation of those who Dogmatize on every Thing; such a Domineering Method being apt to make the Mind rebell. But, I am forc'd to say it, there is not a less Inconvenience in the other Extream, and I believe that if we would enjoy the Pleasure of Conversation as delicate *Wits*, we should also take an Advantage of it as reasonable *Men*.

There is nothing in my Opinion, that spoils so much the Judgment of a Gentleman, as his delighting too much in a false Delicacy. 'Tis nourishing one's self with Meats of little Substance; and how agreeable soever they may be to the Palate, they are certainly too light for Use. That which pleases most the Mind, is not what contributes the most to the instructing it. We ought to distrust those who supply and fill up Conversation with so much Vivacity and Fineness, and ought to dread the falling into such nice Company as much as Mariners do Rocks. If I did not know how easy it were to discover the *wretched Emptiness and Vanity* of such Conversation, I would farther enlarge my self upon it to give you an exact Description of it. But its Faults being daily expos'd to the Eyes of all the World, I shall not insist upon shewing what is but too much in sight. 'Twill

suffice for the Conclusion of this Part, to remark two or three of those principal Defects, being as it were the Fountain of all others, and the most common to *Wits*.

## XXXIII.

The Freedom of Conversation does not exclude Bounds and Rules. 'Tis a Commerce of Thoughts and Words; and a good Order and Method is as necessary to carry on that Commerce as any other; we ought to receive and return it with some sort of Harmony. But a *Wit*, who is as ready to judge as to discourse, decides immediately every Thing, and answers before he has well heard what was said. His Vivacity transports him; and by the very first Advances he makes, we may perceive he's going too fast. Thus Conversation becomes a Club of Noise and Chattering, where Men talk a great deal, and say little to the purpose.

In the second place, the just distrust modest Men have of their Notions, makes them consider 'em before hand, after which they utter those they think most reasonable, and keep the others to themselves. Such Men offer nothing rashly. But a *Wit*, full of himself, and a great Admirer of his own Opinions,

Opinions, cannot forbear uttering all he knows, and talking of every Thing. This itch of talking proceeds for the most part from an insatiable Desire of having People speak advantageously of him; and the Ambition of being esteem'd, which would not be perhaps an Imperfection in another, is really so in him, because he is immoderate, and his Pride is the Occasion of it.

In the third place, a Man who is a Master of *Wit* never boasts much of it; but is rather for valuing that of other Men, and wisely knowing that we do not love to be out-done; but principally in ingenuity and *Wit*, if he finds he has any Advantage over others, he modestly hides their want of it. A *Wit* is ignorant of those Maxims, or cannot make use of them. He will engross *Wit* to himself, and earnestly wishes that all other Men were *Fools*; and as in his Temper he is apt to scorn and deride others, so he slight's every Thing which is not the Product of his own Brain.

In short, every Thing, and Conversation among the rest, ought to have its just Limits. We are to live, not to be always together. As too long a Retirement dulls the Spirits, so too frequent a keeping of Company is apt to dissipate 'em; and the most solid Mind may be weakened by either

of them. By the one it becomes like those heavy Bodies which have no Strength or Vigour, for want of Exercise; and by the other, like those that are wasted and spent, for want of Rest. But a *Wit* flies at all, and takes as much Pains to shew himself as the *Stupid* does to conceal himself. Always wandering, unsettled, and forward to appear, he bestows himself upon all sorts of Men, because he can't enjoy himself. Happy if content with himself, as much as many others are with him, he had not the Conversation of certain cold and reserv'd Men to fear, who neither make too much haste, nor perplex themselves, but always give themselves the leisure to examine Things by Reason, rather than be surpris'd and seduc'd by the Senses.

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## P A R T II.

## Of WIT in BOOKS.

## I.

ALL Witty Compositions may be reduc'd to the Three following Heads, viz. *Poetry, Oratory, or History.* For I suppose a Man of *Wit* designs to pass either for a *Poet*, an *Orator*, or an *Historian*.

If he's a *Poet*, and has a happy Talent in that sort of *Poetry* he pretends to, I know nothing that sooner gains him the Character he so much affects, I mean that of *Wit*, that recommends and sets him off to more Advantage, than this single Qualification. A few *Stanzas*, an *Ode*, or a *Poem*, made and approv'd of by certain Persons, at a happy juncture, and in some certain Circumstances, have seldom fail'd to intitle him to the Name of a *Wit*, to distinguish him from the common Herd, and to procure him an honourable Place among the *Wits* in some famous *Academies*.

*Poetry* has wonderful Charms, and of all the different Branches of *Wit*, that of a good *Poet* is the most agreeable, and most taking: For which Reason I readily own it better deserves this Name than any other *Quality*; and I may venture once more to affirm it after I have told my Reader what I understand by that *Term*.

If we respect only the Senses, and their Pleasures, the Imagination, and its Charms, the Passions and their Motions; a good *Poet*, I confess, is really inestimable; because amongst the other Pleasures of the Mind, the Talent of *Poetry* is the most exquisite, especially to Persons of a delicate Fancy.

But if we will guide our selves by our Reason and its Decisions, this *Quality* becomes on a sudden contemptible; the pretended Charms and Excellencies of a *Poet's* Wit being like those dull heavy Beauties we look on with Indifference.

## II.

Before we determine any Thing in this Matter, we must first consider, whether we mean to examine the Thing in it self, or in Relation to our selves, whether we design our Pleasure, or Truth. After which we may take which side we please, either that  
of

of Imagination or Reason, the Senses or the Mind, which are Things altogether opposite. We ought to leave Imagination to the *Poets* and their *Favourers*. Let us allow their Fancy to be never so Lively, Vast and Charming to a Wonder, they may pass for *Wits* indeed; but how can the greatest Part of them pretend to the Character of *Men of Judgment*, who reason weakly, and whose Knowledge is narrow and scanty? By consequence they are not so worthy as we think them of the Admiration of rational Men, nor of the esteem of the Learned.

I say the greatest part of them, for the Rule is not without Exception. I know some who are so happy as to join the Delicacy of Fancy with an excellent *Judgment*, the Solid with the Agreeable. But I speak in general, the Mind in *Poetry* wanders and roves, and a *solid Judgment* can hardly reconcile it self to the Liberties of *Poetry*.

There is nothing comparable to the Trouble a warm'd Imagination occasions in a *Poets* Mind? nothing can equal the Confusion caus'd in it by the delicate Pleasure he feels and makes others sensible of.

When a *Poet* has for some time strain'd himself to bring forth excellent Notions upon his Subject in hand; when he has

often put his thoughts upon the Rack, to find a proper Expression or a Rhyme; if he will but reflect on the Impressions which are form'd in his Brain, and the Images they represent, where is then the Liberty of his Mind? and what Use can he make of it? If he meditates, he creeps; if he examines, he falls. He must necessarily abandon himself wholly to his Imagination, and its Flights; he must push it forward, and follow it close. For, the more it is heated, the loftier the Thoughts seem to be, the more it is kept up, the nobler are the Expressions.

——— *Seclantem levia, nervi:*

*Deficiunt, animique; professus grandia, turget;  
Serpit humi, tutus nimium, timidusq; procella.*

We must then subdue our Reason, if Imagination must rule; weaken the one, to fortifie the other; for we cannot put them in the same Degree, nor place them in the same Rank.

### III.

It being the principal business of a Poet to paint well, and make lively Images of what he conceives, he must be as much, if not more, imploy'd in the search of Words, and their Measure; than the nature of Things. The stronger the Expression is, the



the more lively and agreeable is the Impression it makes. He must therefore strain himself to humour a strong Imagination rather than consult just and good Reason, and rather aim at lively Representations, than right and solid Judgment.

'Tis the Property of the Mind to instruct and enlighten, and of the Imagination to touch and delight, as that of the Passions to move. If a *Poet* does not please, he's insipid; if he does not move, he's cold. He must therefore be touch'd first himself, and mov'd by the very Passion he wou'd excite. Passions are commonly mov'd by Passions, and Motions caus'd by the like Motions. We then ought to consider a *Poet* mov'd, touch'd, and troubl'd as many ways as he has Sentiments to express, and Motions to follow; and by a necessary Consequence, always depriv'd of that Force and Liberty, in which alone the Exactness and Perfection of his Mind consists.

Far from preserving his Own, he must deprive others of theirs, to please them and make himself admir'd. It is not allowable in a *Poet* to be indifferent. He must either Charm, or Disgust, Excel, or Creep; there is no *Medium*. I believe it proceeds from this; that a *Poet* who means to gain

Ap-

Applause, ought not to give his Mind leisure to know it self, nor his Reason the time to examine. Verses ought to move, and ravish, every time we read or hear them read. If they do not, but leave our Minds free, Reason will soon enter, which for the most part not finding any thing in them worthy its Consideration, despises the Terms, and laughs at their fine Order and Gingling. The Imagination finds not its satisfaction in them, Reason much less. Thus every Thing languishes, and the Poet is cry'd down.

*Non satis est Pulchra esse poemata, dulcia  
sunt ;  
Et quocunq; volent animum Auditoris a-  
gunt.*

Not but Men may so write, that Reason may have as great a Share as Imagination, and that the Readers may find wherewithall to exercise the one, as well as satisfy the other. There are Men of that excellent Genius, who at the same time Please and Instruct, move and Inlighten ; but this is so extraordinary, and 'tis so difficult to keep

s Order, that a Poet finds it more his Advantage to overthrow it, in giving a free scope to Imagination, and little to Reason.

It

It ought, generally speaking, to be with Verses, as with the Beams of the Sun, which we cannot stedfastly look on without being dazzled by them. The number of passionate is much greater than that of moderate Men, and a *Poet* who has the Secret to move, and to inspire great Thoughts, shall always pass for a good *Poet*. But if he be not so to all the World, 'tis because the Dispositions of the Brain in all Men are not the same, and that their Minds are not equally affected with the same Things. In those Things which depend solely on good Sense, 'tis purely Want of Understanding which makes that displease one Man which is approved by another. But in what depends on Imagination, if Men do not agree, 'tis because some have a fainter, or a different Relish of Things, than others. Reason is always One, and Pure; but the Senses are almost every where Different.

## IV.

Those who only write to move the Passions, how agreeable soever their Performance be, must not expect to be approv'd of by all the World; not even by those who wholly judge by their Passions. We have a great Instance of it in the Judgments

ments pass'd upon two great Poets of our Time.

The Age is so Fantastical, that Men who reject all manner of Rules, only to apply themselves to what pleases and flatters their Imagination, have sometimes despis'd *Racine*, as delicate, and as insinuating a Poet as he is, and cannot enough esteem *Corneille* who commands and instructs them: Men that flie from every Thing that requires Approbation, that cannot relish a moral and imperious Character both together, who cannot suffer before their Eyes Examples they cannot follow, nor Actions they cannot imitate, are the first to prefer the Works of *Corneille*, before those of *Racine*: Tho' the Character of the last is most natural, exposing only the Idea of Motions we our selves follow, and see followed by others; setting before our Eyes those Actions we find our selves capable of, and to which we are naturally inclin'd. We also see *Corneille* crown'd with Lawrels by those who are angry and disgusted with the least Fault in the Language; who love only that which delicately moves, whilst they can scarcely say one favourable Word of *Racine*, who is rich in his Thoughts, correct in his Expressions, and who Flatters and Pleases.

Bur

But if we consider, that the Passions, which are the same in all Men, are not of the same Force in all; that there are governing and predominant Passions, which however do not always Rule and upon all Occasions in the Hearts of those they possess; that there are others which for a time usurp their Place, which inspire new Sentiments, and give another Prospect of Things; we shall not be astonish'd that those who now are Charm'd with that which Tickles and Flatters, at another Time are only touch'd by that which surprises. The Passion for the Sublime, and Noble Style, prevails then over the Moving and Pathetical. The Soft and Tender Expressions yield to the Sublime and Lofty, till on some other Occasion it resumes its first Place, and makes way for its opposite Sentiments.

The Spirit of Grandeur in most of the Works of *Corneille*, makes a far deeper Impression on some Men when dispos'd for it, than the Tenderness which is inspir'd in them by the Writings of *Racine*; and on the contrary in the Minds of a great many others, or indeed of themselves at another Time, the Flattering and Tender Style of *Racine*, shall be infinitely esteem'd before the Loftiness of *Corneille*.

All Men are of a different Temper; and the Temperament in each Man is not always the same as to every Thing. The Blood and the Spirits are dispos'd in some otherwise than in others, and receive great Changes in every particular Man. They are more or less Cold or Hot, according as they are fixed or agitated by their several Ferments. The Course of the Spirits is not always equal in the Brain, and goes not with the same Force; thence it happens that in Things which depend on the Imagination, one is for the Sublime, another for the Delicate and Charming; some delight in that which raises the Mind, others in that which moves; and if the delicate Fancy of these is charm'd with the Writings of *Racine*, the Pride of the others finds its Satisfaction in the Writings of *Corneille*. The truth is, if we will give a rational Judgment, we must own there is a great deal of Softness and Passion in *Corneille* upon several Occasions, as well as of the Great and Sublime in *Racine*, and that they are two excellent Men in their several Ways of Writing.

## V.

If to avoid the *Medium* so fatal to *Poets*, it is often convenient for them to surprise by their Sublimity, it does not less concern them to allure by Pleasure. They must either Dazle or Please, two dangerous Rocks, against which most *Poets* are Wreck'd. The Danger is so much the greater; because it is not sufficient for a *Poet* to write fine or pretty Things; but he must also meet with Men dispos'd to relish them. The difficult Point therefore of a *Poet*, is to find the most natural Way to quicken the Fancy, and the Art chiefly consists, in my Opinion, in the choice, in the harmony and just measures he observes, in the most exact, convenient, and natural Cadence of his Verses, in Reference to those who read them, and to the Subject he treats of. We often find that only by a handsom and noble, but principally a new Turn of Expression, a *Poet* pleases, and makes himself esteem'd.

*Dixeris egregie, notum si callida verbum  
Reddiderit junctura novum.*

Few Men penetrate any farther, being as it were enchanted by the peculiar Order  
and



and Placing of the Words, the happy Choice of the Rhymes, and a Concord of Sounds and Words which make a kind of Harmony.

The Reason is, because there is a certain Proportion which agrees with the Imagination in those Things that depend on it, as we find there is one which pleases the Senses in sensible Objects. As the Ear is pleas'd with an Harmony of Sounds, the Taste with a certain seasoning of Meat well dress'd, and the Sight with a certain diversity of Colours well sorted and matched; so we find in Things well imagin'd, and in just Expressions, a certain Turn, a certain Measure, a certain Congruity which pleases, and makes us own the *Poet* happy in his Thoughts. If this Proportion be not exactly just, if there be the least Defect, it offends. Some Things there are which cannot properly be introduced into some Subjects, and therefore 'tis absurd to crowd them there, while others come naturally and proper to the Subject.

We may easily perceive those differences, without being able to determine either in what they consist, or from whence they proceed; because judging of them only by the Senses or the Imagination. We cannot know what Things are but as they  
relate



relate to our selves. If they are Good or Evil, that is to say, if they please or displease us, for 'tis the Pleasure or the Pain they create in us, which makes us pass our Verdict accordingly.

This Pleasure whether it proceeds from the Senses, or the Imagination, is often produc'd by a certain Conformity between Us and the Objects. Which Conformity makes us admire and relish them, as their Disproportion offends and makes us hate them.

According as those Conformities are more or less just, the Pleasures are more or less great; which is another Reason that amongst the Things we relish, we like some better than others, what we love at one time we slight at another, and what pleases one day may displease us the next.

An excellent Poet of old Rome was not ignorant of what importance it was, to make his Verses acceptable, to nick the Time wherein there would be most Conformity between his Epigrams, and the Disposition of the Mind of him to whom he address'd Them, when he said,

*Hora libellorum decima est, Eupheme, me-*  
*orum,*

*Temperat ambrosias cum tua cura dapes,*  
*Et bonus æthereo laxatur nectare Cæsar.*

He

He thought it the best Time for his Verses to be read, when the Imagination of the Prince warm'd with Wine, and disposing him to Pleasure and Mirth, put some Proportion between his jovial Humour, and the *Poets* Wit and Gayety. On the contrary his Muse durst not, said he, appear in a free and sedate Time, when the Prince possess'd with solid Thoughts, was of a much colder Temper; because his Gravity and Seriousness would not be pleas'd with his Wit and Jestings.

—— *Gressu timet ire licenti*  
*Ad matutinum nostra Thalia Jovem:*

Nothing so much proves the Truth of what I have said, as the Sentiments that almost all the World has of Verses and *Poets*. We do not like them but when the Measure, the Choice of Words, the Harmony of Rhymes, the natural Connexion of the Verses and their particular Order, the Turn of Expression, and the Proportion well observ'd in all those Things, flatter our Imagination, and raise our Fancy, by the present Conformity they have with us.

If those Proportions are not well observ'd, if the Expressions are mean, the Style perplex'd, the Measures false, they produce  
nothing

nothing but a Dissonance, which displeases and tires us by its Disproportion.

## VI.

With the good leave of our *Poets*, the whole Secret of their Art consists in finding Terms, and ranging them in good Order.

— *Nisi quod pede certo  
Differt Sermoni, Sermo merus.*

'Tis most commonly the only Thing that distinguishes them. The Beauty of their Thoughts vanishes, almost as soon as you strip them of the Beauty of their Expressions. Let us take one of the finest Places of any *Poet*, which we have been the most charm'd with, and turn it into another Language, or into the same in other Terms; that very Place shall immediately lose its Excellency, and very often becomes Mean and Dull,

— *Eripias si  
Tempora certa, modosq; & quod prius ordine  
verbum est*

*Pofterius facias, praeponens ultima primis.*

By which we see that Imagination has a greater share in Poetry than the Mind; that 'tis Imagination that forms the noble Talent of a *Poet*, and which alone makes that Sort of *Wits*.  
Not

Not that I design absolutely to exclaim against all sorts of *Poetry*, or declare my self a sworn Enemy of the *Poets*. I must own it, I esteem their Talent, and set a Value on their fine Verses. I am, like others, pleas'd with them, but they must pardon me if I cannot acknowledge them to be what they are not, nor esteem them more than they really deserve.

There are two sorts of Men who are always opposing each other ; those who aim at Niceness and Delicacy, and those who affect Soundness of Reason. The former laugh at the latter for their Pedantry, and these scorn the others for their want of solid Judgment. Neither of 'em are much to blame ; for Delicacy ought to be supported by Solidity, and this ought to be adorn'd with Delicacy. Without this Temperament, the one seems Light and Ridiculous, and the other Wild and Enthusiastick.

This Dispute is chiefly carried on between the *Philosophers* and *Poets*. The *Philosopher* in the *Poet's* Opinion is nothing but a dreaming Dotard, and the *Philosopher* thinks the *Poet* an airy Coxcomb. To put an end to this Controversy, the *Philosopher* should be more Polish'd, and the *Poet* more Solid.

'Tis unreasonable to think, that a great Capacity and sound Judgment is the only Qualification that is requir'd in solid and serious Works; and that a neat Invention, and Delicacy will suffice in those that are fine and agreeable. For both the one and the other would be exceedingly better and of greater worth, if Reason and Politeness govern'd equally in them both; and if we would endeavour to be Witty, without being less Rational, or follow good Sense, without being less Polite.

## VII.

What I have said of a *Wit* who values himself for his *Poetry*, I may almost say of him who pretends to distinguish himself by his *Eloquence*. Their Talents are very different; yet they have this common to them both, that *True Wit* has scarce any share in their Productions. 'Tis only another Turn of Imagination, which distinguishes the *Orator* from the *Poet*; 'tis another Manner of Surprizing, and Moving, which are the two principal Ends of a *Wit*, Whatever Talent he has to Compass them.

As the Design of a *Poet* is to represent Things well, and to turn his Conceptions into lively and sensibly Images in his Verse; so all the Skill of an *Orator* consists in giving  
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you fine Draughts of his Imagination in his *Eloquence*. But as neither of them can draw (if I may use that Expression) but after the Images and Expressions ingrav'd in their Brain, and which properly they do but Copy; they must of necessity strongly apply their Minds to those Images and incessantly look on them; always enslav'd to their Imaginations, as well as guilty of all the Violence they commit on Reason, and all the Disorder they cause in the Mind. For if once they take their Imagination for their Guide, they must absolutely follow it, and resolve at the same time to fall into all its Errors.

For this Reason we must not think it strange, if their Paintings, (otherwise very fine) are in reality so little Natural, and if those we call *Wits* palm false and counterfeit Thoughts upon us. They scarcely see any thing but through thick Clouds rais'd by their over-heated Imaginations in their Minds; that is, by the Impressions the Animal Spirits which are subtil and agitated ingrave in their Brain; as I have already explain'd it in Conformity to the Nature of the Fibres, the Disposition of the Blood, and Quality of the Ferments which mix with them.

## VIII.

There are two sorts of *Eloquence*, a True, and a False one ; and there are two sorts of *Genius* which put them both in Practice. Some apply themselves as much, if not more, to the Knowledge of the Matter they are to speak of, than to the Manner ; and use all their Skill to manage well their Subject rather than Imbellish it. Others never penetrate into their Subject, but make it their whole Business to find out the manner and means of rendring it agreeable ; these labour rather to adorn than dive into it, and take less care to discover what it is, than to disguise it by making it appear what it is not.

We may easily discover the difference of those sorts of *Eloquence*, if we will but consider their principal Ends. True *Eloquence* has three, viz. to Instruct, Please, and Persuade ; as a famous Orator handsomely expresses it. *Ut Veritas pateat, ut Veritas placeat, ut Veritas moveat.* False *Eloquence* has also three Ends, viz. to Dazle, to Touch, and Surprize. They absolutely differ, both in their Ends and Ways. For tho' both may very often equally Please and Persuade, there is yet this Difference between them, that one is for the Pleasure of the

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Senses and Imagination, and the other for the Pleasure of the Mind. One persuades by Reason, the other by Impression. And because neither of 'em can attain their Ends but by assiduously applying themselves to fine Imaginations, and noble Descriptions; to do it effectually, the one must first bring forth the Products of Imagination with the Conceptions of the Mind, and compare the Images engraven in the Brain with the clear Ideas of the Mind; whereas the other submits all to the Information of the Senses, and judges as Fancy leads him.

## I X.

Let us now see if true *Eloquence*, such as it ought to be in its natural Purity, whose Source is the Light of the Mind, and which takes only from a well regulated Imagination those Helps that are necessary to produce this Light, can be the part of a *Wit*.

To solve this Doubt, we need only reflect upon the Works of several Men, either printed or spoken, even of those, who, by I know not what good Fortune have gain'd the Admiration of the World. What fine Words! What Phrases! What Antitheses! What Flights! What Fire do we not find in their *Orations*! But, if we do but seriously penetrate into the Bottom of them, we shall find



find it all to be but Emptiness \*. I should never have done, if I here were minded to recite all the particular Examples of this false *Eloquence*, our Libraries would furnish me with Volumes full of 'em. But a few Reflections will serve to remark the Faults committed by these *Vits* in their Pieces of *Oratory*, by which they propos'd to raise their Reputation in the World.

When we say such a Man is a Man of *Eloquence*, we mean one who produces just Notions on the Subject he treats of; who finds proper and genuine Reasons for what he says; and who has the Art and Talent to explain them in a lively, but pure and clear manner to others. For after all, a Discourse has no true Ornaments, but such as are extracted from the Justness of the Thoughts that compose it, from the Soundness of the Reasons that support it, and from the natural Manner of turning it.

Thus we banish from true *Oratory* those vain Imbellishments which disfigure it; such as rambling and general Notions, weak and scatter'd Reasons, useless Digressions, strain'd Figures, and forc'd Comparisons;

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\* *Multa sine sensu dicta, ut expleatur circuitus: Curamus ut numerus constet, non curamus ut sensus.*

in a Word, all those Frothy Speeches full of nothing but Words, and little to the Purpose. *A Man of Wit* seems to me the most subject to fall into all these Errors and Extravagancies, as well in respect of his Stile as Thoughts, the two principal Things which ought to fix our Judgment either in reading, or hearing.

As among those who pretend to write, either in *Prose* or *Verse*, a *Wit* is one that makes the greatest Efforts to shew and distinguish himself by his Stile; so the Ambition he has to write something extraordinary makes him fall into two inevitable Errors, common to all vain and presumptuous *Authors*, viz. Meanness and Confusion. Nicety, and too trifling a Delicacy, insensibly entangles him in the first; and the Sublime, or Admirable he affects, leads him into the other, according as his Imagination more or less hurries him to be Sublime or delicate, and he can never express himself in a noble Stile, without swelling, and in a Delicate without too much Nicety.

## X.

If the Works of a *Witty Man* want the Graces of Plainness and Clearness of Style, we will find much less Truth and Instruction in his Sentiments. He

He that will not reflect on the Natural Knowledge which our Mind discovers as it were within it self, whenever he will seriously fix upon it; that will not dive again into the first Principles, and those great and first Truths on which depends the Certainty of all the rest; and who will not bring back again to them that Chain of Reflections Custom obliges us to make; such a Man can never know any Truths with Assurance, even of those that are commonly receiv'd. He shall neither be well convinc'd, nor strongly perswaded of any Thing, not even of that which he believes he knows the best; because he only believes it but by Prepossession; without any other Foundation than what he builds on weak Conjectures, on the Authority of others, or the Opinion of the World.

We ought not therefore to expect any Thing excellent from an *Author*, but in proportion as he is capable of making Reflections. Now I'll leave you to judge if a giddy fickle Imagination, and a false Delicacy ever give a *Wit* the leisure to make any serious Reflections.

Nevertheless he is applauded, and esteem'd by most Men, tho' Clearness, the chief Beauty of any Discourse (as a great *Orator* tells us) is seldom seen in his Works,

and altho' he amuses us either with unintelligible Stuff or false Reasoning, because we are commonly such Fools as to be pleased with it. Those pretended fine Things we find in them, the more Obscure they are, the more Beautiful they appear; they fill the Imagination, or please the Mind; which is the Reason that we either Admire, or Love them.

## XI.

By the Admiration which arises from the Impression made in the Brain by something which appears very Extraordinary, or from the Surprise it produces in the Soul, the Animal Spirits dispers'd in the Nerves, move with greater swiftness, so that Part of the Brain where the Impression has been made. They augment and preserve it, as long as their Motion lasts, and the Cause that produc'd it; keeping by Consequence the Soul as it were in Suspence, so that it cannot in that Interval apply it self to any Thing else.

The same Effect is also wrought on a great many Men by those choice Expressions, fine Figures, pompous Descriptions, and bold Characters, which fill and adorn those eloquent *Orations* so much boasted of, and of which one may say what an  
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Ancient *Writer* said on the same Subject, *Plus sonant quam valent*; because in effect, they impose upon us by the confus'd Noise they make. 'Tis impossible but the false glittering that reigns in those Discourses must fill the Imagination of those who read or hear them, by communicating a Motion to the Animal Spirits, proper to make an unexpected Impression in their Brain, and by this means surprise the Soul. Which continues affected with the surprise till the Motion of the Animal Spirits being weakned, the Impression wears off, or is not so fresh; and then the Soul returns from its Surprise as it were from a Dream.

By the Approbation which proceeds from the Impression made on the Senses by Things that seem Pleasant, and the sweet Commotion they cause in the Soul, the Animal Spirits delicately agitated equally spread themselves in the Brain, and the rest of the Body, and put into a Disposition proper to produce Sentiments that flatter and please the Soul, and which intice it towards those Objects that caus'd the Impression.

The same Effect is made on the Minds of *beau Monde*, who are always more Sensible than Reasonable, by that vain subtilty of Thoughts, that we set out with the name of Delicacy, that Contexture of fine Terms,

that Exquisite Mixture of Figures, that Turn of Expression which seems Natural, but is not, that Measure of Phrases accompani'd with a certain Tone of the Voice; which makes a kind of Harmony that tickles the Ear; in one word, all those false Flourishes we remark in the best receiv'd Writings, and which prepossess the World in favour of their *Author*. But when the Impression is once worn out, the Commotion of the Soul ceases, and that pretended Beauty of Discourse vanishes with the prepossessing Pleasure from whence it had its Original.

Now this is the whole Compass of a Wit's Talent, let him write in *Verse* or *Prose*, to Dazzle by false Glittering, or Prepossess by Pleasure; without suffering the Light of the Mind or Reason to have any share in it. Those Writings are like certain Women, who please, tho' not handsome, by something unaccountably Agreeable, and which surprises, tho' we cannot tell where in those Charms consist. 'Tis the same with Speeches full of uncommon Notions and lively Expressions, which please, but leave us in the Dark as to the Thing that makes us relish them.

## XII.

I am not surpris'd, that a *Wit* should endeavour to gain himself a Reputation by his *Poetry* or *Rhetorick*. As to those two Things do almost wholly depend on the Imagination, he may promise himself success from his natural Talent. But that he should take upon him to be an *Historian*, and pretend to write *History*, is an unpardonable Temerity, because nothing can be more contrary to his Character. I do not mean those Books that go under the Name of little *Histories* or *Romances*, the chief Design of which is to amuse and please with fine Expressions and Fictions, and therefore a *Wit* may here come off with Honour. But I mean *Histories* of States, or particular Men illustrious either by their Birth or Merit. And I wonder, chiefly for these two Reasons, at the Confidence of certain pretended *Wits* who undertake to write such *Histories*. The first is, because they are ignorant of them; and the second, because they are oblig'd to disguise that little Insight they have in them.

To make what we advanced plainer, 'tis necessary to make some Reflections on what we commonly understand by *History*, on the Manner of Studying it, and on



the End we propose to our selves by that Study.

I think I may safely say, that most Men look upon *History* to be nothing else but a Relation of Facts, a Heap of Names, and a long Collection of Events; that all the Application it requires, consists in retaining the Names, bringing the Facts together, and charging the Memory with them, to have 'em ready upon all Occasions, so as to make our selves acceptable in Company and distinguish'd in the World.

In order to which we may observe, that people apply themselves to reading, and running over all the *Historians* one after another, both *Ancient* and Modern, Good and Bad. As for Order they follow none, but regulate themselves in that Point only as Occasion, and certain Circumstances of Time, require one *History* to be more present to them than another, and all this to flatter their Vanity to which they sacrifice every Thing. If we did not know the influence of humane Pride, we could hardly believe that Men should judge so ill of *History*, and that they should make so mean an Use of it. Yet it is but too Evident, and the Error is no less General than Gross.



## XIII.

*History* comprehends the Knowledge of Times and Ages, the Alliances of Families, the Revolutions of States, and Interest of Princes, their Characters, memorable Actions, and the Means and Methods they employ'd to execute them, as well as a Knowledge of the Actions of several other Men of Name and Reputation. And indeed the knowledge of those Things deserves our Application.

But the end we ought to propose to our selves herein should be Instruction and Knowledge, for we can propose nothing else to our selves by our Studies, but to render our selves Experienced and Virtuous. If we go upon other Designs, they are in every respect Vain and False, and we cannot excuse the Weakness of those that are guilty of them.

If we make Knowledge and Virtue the scope of our reading, *History* comprehends every thing necessary for so great an End. 'Tis a large Field where we may reap an infinite Number of excellent Lessons, lest us by the Author, without designing any such thing, who in their Time wrote more for their own Honour than our Instructions; and nothing but our own ill manage-

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ment can deprive us of so happy and so plentiful a Harvest.

The first false Step they who deprive themselves of this Advantage make, is when they suppose they have perform'd their Duty, by burdening they Memory with abundance of Chronology, in giving a punctual Account of Families, from the highest down to the lowest Branch; in filling their Minds with a Series of Occurrences, as difficult to be retain'd as they are ill digested. All this cannot but darken the Mind instead of inlightning it, and load us instead of instructing us.

On the contrary, by the End every one ought to propose to himself in his Studies, 'tis easie to judge that nothing but a serious Attention, can give us that Profit we might otherwise expect from the study of *History*. This Study does not consist, in reading *History* simply to satisfy the Curiosity we have to know what was acted in former Ages; but rather to have an Occasion of comparing the Past with the Present, with relation to the Time to come. In this the great Advantage we receive from *History* consists, as well in relation to the Mind, as to the Heart. Which is thus.

## XIV.

We know that to what Science soever we apply our selves, a good Wit, good Instructions, and Industry are necessary Conditions to make us Proficients in it, and that good Masters are a great Help to us to remove the Difficulties we meet with. But, with all those Dispositions and helps, we cannot fully master it, till after a great Application and long Exercise. Let our Beginning be never so promising, our succeeding Care never so great, nothing but a consummate Experience can make a great Man.

*History* supplies the defect of Age and Experience in Men that make a good Use of it; I mean such as can judge of what is to come by what's past, and to regulate the present both by the one and the other; which is the most considerable Benefit of this Science. Those that neglect this Advantage, or are not capable of taking it, had best lay aside this Study, how good soever their Memory may be to retain what they read.

Our Mind is full of Difficulties and Clouds which darken it, and that Trouble the most acute Men meet with in great Enterprises, does but too much prove the Weakness of our Understanding. The Knowledge

ledge of *History* may help to dissipate those Clouds, not only by setting before our Eyes an infinite Variety of Events and particular Affairs, but by giving us an Occasion to penetrate into the most hidden Causes of Events by Reflections, and so enabling us to discover the secret Springs of Affairs, their Motives and Inducements, with the Contexture that serves to justify them. What signifies it for a Man to know what is past, if he be ignorant of the Reasons and Causes of it? he only satisfies his Curiosity, and keeps himself in Ignorance.

What is past can neither serve the present nor what is to come, any otherwise than by the Coherencies we discover between what is already done, and what may be done. Those Coherencies are different. Some outward, such as shew apparent resemblances between the Things we compare. Others inward, such as are inherent in the very Body of the Subject, of Causes and Circumstances, and these discover perfect Resemblances. For the Discovery therefore of these Coherencies we ought to search into the very Bottom, without stopping at the Surface. And nothing but this particular Discovery of the Ground and Bottom of Things, can supply the place of Experience, and make Histo-

ry, as to the Mind, supply the Defects of Age.

## XV.

Since *History* is full of great and manifold Examples of Prudence, Generosity, and Vertue, the Heart may improve it self as well as the Mind. Has any Thing so much Power over us as Example? Does it not persuade us a hundred times more than all the Eloquence of the *Orators*? If this has the Force to move us, Example which is more powerful, often hurries us away without giving us time to recollect our selves.

But, whereas good Examples are for the most part mix'd with bad, and these make as great, if not a greater Impression on us than the others, therefore an exquisite Judgment is requir'd to avoid the second, and follow the first. Precipitation in this Case is dangerous, and would be apt to hurry us into Mistakes. 'Twould make us find in *History* Fewel to inflame our Passions, instead of Means to moderate them.

Nor must we be upon our Guard against bad Examples only, for in some Sense good ones may prove injurious. We may admire great Examples, without pretending to follow them; some we may both esteem and follow, but there are none we can in all respects imitate.

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Tho' we often discover what will be, or ought to be done, by what is already past, and may determine our selves by the Example of others; yet there is something very singular in Facts, which alters the Species, and requires a prudent regard. Capacity is requisite in every Thing, but not every where the same. For which Reason one of the greatest *Politicians* of our Age did not require an entire and exact Knowledge of *History* in a States Man, but only a general Insight into it; because, said he, the Occasions and Circumstances not being the same at all times, he is more to be esteem'd for the Penetration of his Mind, than for his Knowledge. He might have said more; for Accidents and Circumstances are sometimes the same, and yet the Events vary. So that, to avoid Mistakes, we must be very wary and circumspect; and I defy the most happy Memory furnish'd with the finest Passages of *History*, to keep one from being misled.

## XVI.

If this Science can make a good *Politician*, if it instructs one how to live like a Man of Honour, and to govern himself as a wise and Prudent Man; it must be granted, that this happens only when 'tis well understood.

stood by the Mind, and acquir'd by Reflections. Imagination and Memory are no more requisite to it, than to fix our Thoughts on what we examine, or to bring into our Mind what has been formerly examin'd by us; which is done much easier by Reflection, than by bare Reading without it. For 'tis certain that Reflection is a mighty Help to make us Remember, and that Judgment is a very great Assistant to Memory; tho' as I have formerly observ'd 'tis of little Help to the Judgment, and may in one Sence be an Hindrance to it.

'Twould be over-straining the Point, to say on this Hypothesis, that a happy Memory is no good Quality for the solid learning of *History*. But that it is not the best, nor the most necessary, and that it is not the Quality we ought to make most Use of to arrive at the perfect Knowledge of *History*, is a Truth not to be denied.

The Knowledge of the World is also one of the most considerable Advantages we can reap from *History*; but it is because that Science has its Principle in the Knowledge of Man, and that *History* gives us perfectly that Knowledge. I mean a Moral Knowledge, rather than Metaphysical, about which the *Philosophers* raise endless Disputes.

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The World is a Multitude compos'd of People, made almost like Machines resembling each other, but with very different Motions and Actions. A Man cannot know the World without knowing those People, together with the different Motives that make them Act; and, as the Whole is scarce to be known without a particular Knowledge of its Parts, so we can have no perfect Knowledge of the World, without a previous Knowledge of the Men who compose it.

*History* affords us true Paintings of Men's Hearts, such as represent it to the Life, that shew us what 'tis, and what 'tis capable of. It lays open the Passions of Man, and draws 'em more lively than those learned Works that *Authors* have written.

It teaches us to know what Imagination supported by Passion can do, and what the Motions of this are, when actuated by the other. We also know by it what Reason can, or cannot do, together with its Strength and Weakness. The Man and the Hero appear there, and we discover the secret Springs which make them act, in spite of the vain Disguise made use of to hide them. The Life of Man is too short to make all these Discoveries in those we see and converse with during our Abode here;



here ; we must, as it were lengthen, and stretch it out, by joining to it those Men's Lives who are gone before us, and make them serve instead of Old Age to us, which only can defend us from the Ignorance and Surprizes of Youth. *History* lays before us all those Lives, not so much to content our Curiosity, as to fill our Hearts with excellent Maxims of Politicks and Morals, to regulate thereby our Conduct.

Conversation alone makes not an excellent Man ; the use of Books alone, much less. To acquire that Quality, we must know how to mix those two Things with Discretion, observe what passes in the World, and reflect upon what has been done. To *History* we must join our own experience, I mean a true, faithful and exact *History*, such as is the Work of some faithful knowing *Historian* ; not a disguis'd and fabulous *History* which has receiv'd as many Alterations, as it has employ'd Pens, and comes from a suspected and prejudiced *Author*.

## XVII.

As for the Order and Method commonly observ'd in this difficult Study, it seems to me very different from what ought to be follow'd ; Men being for the most part guided

ded in it by their Capricio and Fancy. Some are for reading *History* over and over, it being a Thing as it were impossible but that the Mind must retain something out of so much Variety. Others would have us read all sorts of Books indifferently, at least to accustom our selves to Books and Reading, but wherein lies the Excellency, to read much, and make no Advantage by it? Ignorance is doubtless preferable to such Learning that is more proper to corrupt the Heart than to instruct the Mind.

Tho' we cursorily run over all the *Historians*, and read all their Books; tho' by a wonderful and amazing Strength of Memory we can remember all we read, yet we may still be very far from understanding *History*, as knowing as we may seem to appear in it to the Eyes of the Vulgar, who are always ignorant and easy to be surpriz'd.

Whatever Advantage one may reap from this Science, how great soever his Genius may be, he will not be much the wiser for it, unless he makes some Difference between Knowing or Remembring after he has read, and Understanding or Judging after he has examin'd.

*A Man of Wit*, with all his Genius, his lively, strong, and capacious Imagination, and his happy Memory, is therefore far  
from

from understanding *History*, because he is endow'd but with the least part of those necessary Dispositions for that Study, and is incapable of the Principal ones.

What I have said of *History*, of the Manner of learning it, and of the End Men should propose to themselves in that Study, being compar'd with what our *Men of Wit* think of it, the Method they use to understand it, and the End they propose to themselves by it, does visibly make it appear how incapacitated they are to write *History*, and how rash to undertake a Work they know so little of, and are not in a Condition to understand.

A great Capacity of Mind, a strong Penetration to discover the Truth of Things, and a competent Sincerity to speak it, are Qualities absolutely necessary for a good *Historian*. How many do we find thus qualified? Most of them want Capacity, for want of Reflecting; a great many Sincerity, because they want Liberty. Slaves to their Reputation, I will not say to their Interest, and seduc'd by their *Wit*, they take less Care to write the Truth, than to Flatter and write finely. They are led by common Opinion, and guided by a false Politeness.

On this Subject I shall remark a particular Fault of our Man of *Wit*, viz. that he seldom writes but at other Mens Cost and Labour. He has the Conscience to appropriate to himself what does not belong to him, and the Secret to make it pass for his own. As great a *Transcriber* as he is, he gives his Works the Air of Originals, by which he imposes on Mankind. He changes, turns, and disguises, and so alters the Matter, that he scarce leaves any Title to the Proprietor, by which he may defend his Right. But, should we take it to pieces, and (according to the Law of Nature) restore to every one what belong'd unto him, what would there remain in this *Plagiary*? a new Turn of Expression, a few Choice Words, another Style and way of Expression. This is all we can allow him, and in Effect 'tis all that belongs to him, as appears by those numerous Volumes of stragling *Histories*, which some certain *Wits* expose every day to the World, and which owe the Success they have for a Time, merely to the Charms of Novelty.

## XVIII.

If amongst our *Wits* some value themselves for *Poetry*, some for *Oratory*, others for *History*, there are some who vainly pretend

tend to all three ; and tho' they will not give themselves the Trouble to write, yet gain Esteem by a Sort of Learning, which according to them consists in knowing the *Poets*, and understanding other *Authors*, but most of all the Ancient and Modern *Historians*. It will not be improper therefore to make some few Reflections on the use some of our *Wits* make of this Science, and for which they value themselves under the specious Name of fine *Learning*. The Knowledge of the *Belles Lettres* is, of all Sciences the most generally pursued, and cultivated by all sorts of People that pretend the least to Learning. 'Tis what is first taught our Youth, whatever Employment they are design'd for ; and if some afterwards slight it as an Amusement proper only for Youth, others find such Delight in it, as to make it the serious Occupation of their whole Lives.

The *Mathematicks*, *Philosophy*, *Physick*, *Law*, and *Divinity*, divide Learned Men between them: But all of them agree in their Pretensions to the *Belles Lettres*. Every Man sets up for it, none undervalue it, and if any one has made but a little progress in it, 'tis rather imputed to the Defect of his Memory, than his Remissness to instruct himself in it.

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From all this a Man wou'd be apt to infer, that this Science must needs be of a wonderful Advantage, and that we have some great Design on foot, when we make it our sole Employment. But if we consider the Method us'd to attain it, we may well be surpris'd, that we can't discover what End Men propose to themselves by this Study, and we shall have Reason to believe that most of them take it up without any End at all.

We put into the hands of Children, *Poets* and other *Authors*, to explain and learn by Heart. We force them to this Study by Punishments, or intice them by Rewards. They apply themselves to it for a considerable Time; then rest there, without considering what their Study ought to tend to, nor of what Use it may be to them hereafter. If we ask the *School-masters*, who ought to give us satisfaction in this point, what their Design is in their Employment, they tell us, sometimes, 'tis only to exercise the Memory of Youth, sometimes to accustom them betimes to love Books and Reading, and in short, to give them an universal and general Knowledge of Things.

These are very general, and indeed very Childish Ends; and I do not admire, that they who know no other, should think  
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this pretended Science only fit for a *College*, and the Imployment of *School-boys*.

Those who take a Pride to study it, after another manner, and to make it of greater Use ; who pretend by the Help of it to be reckoned among the Learned, and gain a Reputation among the *Wits* of the World, find out more noble Advantages by it. Of which this is not the least, that by this Learning they acquire a Politeness of Mind not to be had any other Way, how great soever their Natural Parts may be.\*

These Men doubtless are in the right. Learning polishes and instructs the Mind, gives a relish to good Things, and inspires a delicacy of Fancy. 'Tis chiefly by those Inducements that this Science is of such an Universal Use, and that this same Study, which seems most to favour of *School-learning* is that which distinguishes us the most from a *Pedant*.

I do therefore agree as to the End, but I cannot approve of the usual Means made use of to arrive at it. Whilst Men will content themselves with reading carelessly the *Poets* and all other *Authors* without Judgment and Choice, only to know what Subjects they have treated of, in what Time they wrote, and the Names of those Persons they discours'd of ; whilst they shall

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think they have done enough if they have faithfully retain'd a few Apophthegms which they don't understand, or some Verses, or some whole Pages of a Book ill digested; and that they will value themselves, for reciting with assurance what they never learn'd but confusedly; As it is no more than the Effect of a happy Memory, so the pretended Advantage of so trivial a Knowledge will be but a ridiculous Vanity, an Accomplishment more becoming a *Pedant* than a *Gentleman*.

But if on the contrary, according to the Example of those ingenious *Grecians* whose Learning and Politeness has render'd their Nation Famous, Men would make use of this Science but to polish what may be rough and coarse in their Nature, to inspire more delicate Thoughts, and give the Mind a more noble and excellent Impression; As that will be the Effect of well digested Learning, so the Fruit of this Science will be much more exquisite, and the Science it self more esteem'd.

## XIX.

In this we ought to agree with all Men of Judgment, that the Knowledge of humane Learning is proper to Ingenious Men; but we must also confess, that it is sometimes



times the Occupation of Blockheads, by the ill use which may be made of it.

To store up in ones Memory a confus'd Heap of Passages of *Authors*, and Sentences of *Poets*; to repeat very often in Conversation a Latin Verse of one of the ancient *Poets* when we have just heard one of the Company say the same thing very naturally in English; to busie our selves in what place we found the Sentence we quoted, and of which we have forgot the *Author*, rather than consider if it be to the purpose, is the blind side of this Science, and we cannot but very much despise it, if look'd upon with this Disadvantage. But to read with Reflexion, to distinguish the true from the false, the good from the ill, to penetrate with Judgment into the real Sense of an *Author*, to accustom ones self insensibly to the Delicacy that a *Poet* inspires, to relish the real Charms and reject the false, and never to talk in Company but to the purpose and with Discretion; to forget sometimes the fine Expressions we admire in an *Author*, and stick only to his Truths, and so get an Habit of Politeness and Ingenuity; In a word, to be less careful of loading our Memory, than forming our Mind, is the right Use of Learning, and that which makes the whole value of it.

I do not fear to say it, we see very Few who turn it to this good Use. A *Wit* particularly shews he never knew the Importance of it, who applies himself to it only to fill his Imagination, exercise his Memory, and so pass for a Nice and Ingenious Man, without being either. What may be he never understood is, that there is a false Delicacy to be avoided, and a vain Politeness to be fear'd. 'Tis necessary to give to the Mind those Ornaments and Graces which are not natural to it, to which Learning contributes more than any Thing else. But we ought to take care, that by endeavouring to polish it, we do not weaken it, and that too much Delicacy do's not render it Little or Effeminate. 'Tis with the Mind as with any fine Pieces of Workmanship; which become weak and brittle by being too nicely wrought. The last stroke of the Carver's Chisel very often spoils all his Work, and Experience convinces us, that many Men have corrupted their Judgments and Fancy by too much refining them.

## XX.

'Tis common enough with those who value themselves for their Learning, to be more touch'd with a fine Impression than  
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with the Thing expressed, tho' perhaps more Admirable than the Expression it self. The Reason is, that, if they have Sense enough to be charm'd with the Expression, they have not Judgment enough to penetrate into the Goodness of the Thing expressed. Their Fancy is too delicate, and too much polished to be Solid; they have taken away its Force, under pretence of rendering it more Polite. Thus nothing seems fine to them but what agreeably moves and delights, and they take notice of nothing but what shines and surprises, not considering that the Ornaments Men make use of to imbellish their Discourse, let them be of what nature they will, should be regarded only, but as so many Charms which draw us to a stricter and nearer Consideration of those Things, either to know them, or make them useful. 'Tis the Road that leads us to it, but 'tis a mighty Weakness to stop there.

I am not of the Opinion of those morose and severe *Criticks*, who condemn every Thing that has but the Air of politeness and neatness of Fancy; who forbid us to alter any thing from that rough and deform'd State wherein Nature left it. A State they admire the more, as best agreeing with the grossness and coarseness of their

Minds ; as if the Works of Nature were so accomplish'd, that Art must lie still, and have nothing to do. When Beauty it self, in order to gain admiration, is found to borrow Ornaments, which raise and set out its Charms. And so the Mind ought to turn its Thoughts in such a Manner as may raise and make them better relish'd and esteem'd. Without this help, 'twould be like Gold mix'd with the Earth, which keeps it from our Sight, and intirely hides its Lustre.

Having said in another Place, that Imagination makes the fineness and delicacy of the Mind, 'twould be giving my self the lye to disapprove the good Use one may make of it, and to reject all sort of Politeness, either in Speaking or Writing, since it would be to retrench the Effects, when we have admitted the Cause. The Imagination, like a skilful Workwoman, who chuses the best Methods to put her Design in hand, makes use of Books, as necessary Instruments to give a fineness and politeness to the Mind, which is to be attain'd no other Way.

But I have already said it, and I say it again, that, if the Mind wants Penetration and Judgment, if Reason is not advis'd with in all Things, if it does not always  
march

march at the head, if Imagination gets the start, or does not consult it, all Delicacy is vain, the Charms fallacious, and can only please the Vulgar, and Men of no Penetration.

A Man of *Wit*, who sets forth those Charms with so much Confidence in all Companies whatsoever, may sometimes surprise by a false Politeness, which makes him skilfully disguise his own Weakness to himself, and hide it from others; but we perceive it at last through all its Disguises; and the Remark I have often made, that the Man of *Wit* is not a *Wit* at all times, nor before all sorts of Persons, is enough of it self to raise the Doubt, or take off the Mask. The Mode of it changes, as that of Cloaths in *France*. Our ancient *Authors* do not seem less Fantastical to us by some Pieces of *Wit* they have left us, than by the Habits they wore. Their Puns, Equivocations, Sentences, and certain merry Tales which were the choicest Productions of their *Wit*, for the most part, are as much out of Fashion, as their Ruffs and round Breeches. So will the *Wit* of our Time be changed as that of former Ages was for this; and future Ages perhaps will be surpris'd, how 'twas possible for us to be pleas'd with it.

How can a Man of *Wit* assure himself of a more happy Destiny, when he can scarce promise himself a better at present? If lik'd here, he is disliked elsewhere; if applauded to day, 'twill be own'd a mistake to morrow. As his whole Study is to please the Fancy, so Men judge of it only by Caprice. He is but slighted or extolled, as the Blood is more coagulated, or rarefied, more heated, or chilled. Men are the same in respect of Wit, as of Colours. As the liveliest Colours please them at one time, the dullest at another; so they are sometimes for the lofty and sublime, and sometimes for the plain and natural. As for what comes from a Man of Judgment, I find the World is not so changeable, being as it were forced to esteem him, in any State or Condition, tho' somewhat coldly. An Argument that the Imagination is not very well satisfi'd with the honour we pay to Reason.

## XXI.

I make, you see, a great difference between Reason, and Fancy. All the World talks of this, and would have it in Perfection, and no Man explains what it is. For ought I know, it may be one of those Things we should make more obscure by  
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attempting to define it. If I may tell my Thoughts of it, it seems to me a confus'd, but natural Sentiment of the Soul, which moves independantly from its other Lights. This Sentiment is caus'd by the Conformity there is, between the Imagination or the Senses, and the Objects offer'd unto them; because the Impression the Objects make on the Bodies is naturally follow'd by Sentiments of the Soul, agreeable or disagreeable, according to the Conformity between the Soul and those Objects.

But whatever is meant by Fancy, this we must agree in, that it cannot be good and right, any farther than it is conformable to Reason, and follows it close; nor can a Man be said to have a good Fancy; but when he loves nothing but what is True, Natural, and Just. Whatever is False or Confus'd, without either Clearness or Reason, is Naught, and ought to be esteem'd, if our Fancy be not deprav'd. But 'tis very seldom that Fancy which springs from the Dispositions of the Body subject to so many alterations, agrees with Reason which is always uniform; I mean, that confus'd Sentiments and a clear Understanding should hold together. Nor is it a matter of Wonder that what proceeds

from Fancy, having a Dependency on the Body, should be liable to so great alterations, nothing but Reason being Immutable of it self

In Effect, good Sense which makes us discourse like reasonable Men, is the same that made the Ancients speak rationally also. Humour, Fancy, and Fashions may change; but Reason is the same in all Ages, and knows no *Vicissitude*.

We must therefore of necessity relish the ancient *Authors*, where they write good Sense; we need not fear being disapproved by those who shall come after us, if we write after the same manner.

Every Thing that comes from a Man of *Wit* is much more pleasing, because it moves Men more lively, but it does not please long. A Man of *Judgment* pleases not so much, because he does not touch so sensibly; but then he always pleases.



## P A R T III.

*Of WIT in the Affairs of  
the World.*

## I.

THE Ancient Philosophers who left certain Methods, how we ought to regulate our Conduct and Manners for the whole Course of our Lives, have consider'd Men relatively to their different Stations; either in themselves, and as private Persons; or in a Family, as making part of it; or in the State, as Members thereof. They have consider'd 'em, either as living privately, or rais'd to some Dignity; either studying their own proper Interest, and managing their particular Affairs, or engag'd in the Publick, and intrusted with Affairs of State. For indeed these two Occupations imploy the greatest part of Mankind. Of which two sorts of Imployment, a *Wit* in my Opinion is very little capable,  
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no more than of those Instructions that might be given him upon that Subject.

For the most part those who have the Reputation of *Wits* in the World, want two Qualities which are absolutely necessary to make a compleat and able Man; *viz.* Force and Liberty of Mind. They want Force, since too constant application to Business tires them, and it is not in their Power to bestow a serious Attention on what they are about; either the sprightliness and fire of their Minds do's transport them beyond the Bounds of Attention, or a false notion of Delicacy makes them neglect it. They also want Liberty of Mind, or at least are almost incapable of using it; for being Hasty and Impatient, they judge without examining, and decide without making Reflexions. Accustomed to pass over every Thing lightly and without penetration, their Tongues run before their Wit, and are easily prepossessed, because they will not allow themselves time to consider. So that they have two Qualities diametrically opposite to Ability in Affairs, that is, want of Application and Rashness, or Prejudice.

## II.

The natural Disposition of a *Stupid Man*, tho' very contrary to that of a *Wit*, renders a Man every jot as incapable for the management of Affairs. If the Thoughts of the one are too dissipated, the other is too slow. One spoils all by too much Action, the other by too little; and both the one and the other want Perseverance.

The *Stupid* (I mean one in the most common Signification, there being several sorts of them as well as of *Wits*) is always timorous and cautious, dares neither undertake nor do any Thing; not unlike Men that travel an unfrequented Road, who are apprehensive of every Thing, because they see nothing that can remove their Fears. He prefers Ease to Business, and is incapable of any Employment, by Reason of two Defects which are natural to him, *viz.* Inactivity and Distrust.

Yet all Things have their different Aspect, and nothing is so exactly uniform; but shews different Sides. We must therefore apply our selves to know them thoroughly, before we pretend to judge of them. Which a *Wit*, and one that is *Stupid*, either don't do at all, or else do it ill. It seems therefore to be the peculiar Talent of a *Man of Judgment*,

*ment*, who alone keeps a just *Medium* between these two Extreams, worthily to acquit himself in this Affair. On the one hand Penetration improves his Strength of Reason, and on the other Moderation preserves to him its Liberty. Thus both reserv'd and vigilant, he undertakes without Temerity, and goes on with Assurance. He turns Things on every Side, beholds them in every Part, and so carries along with him two essential Dispositions for the Management of Affairs, *viz.* Application and Judgment: One is the Effect of the Strength, the other of the Liberty of his Mind; which are as it were the general Perfections, from whence all the other spring, and wherein his true Merit wholly consists.

But this Character is so opposite, to that of a *Wit*, that we never find them re-united in one and the same Person. To talk indifferently and superficially of all Things, is very different from diving into the bottom of them. To shew Subtlety and Cunning in Consultations, is not unravelling and resolving Affairs. The Gift of discoursing agreeably is quite a different Talent from that of making judicious Reflections. The Natural Dispositions of the one make him incapable of those Things which fit and prepare him for others. To make a  
Man.

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Man of sprightly Wit, the Humours must be brisk and in Motion, and the Animal Spirits full of Fire and Heat. Whereas a cold Blood with a greater Portion of Phlegm, and a well regulated Course of Animal Spirits, are proper for Men of good Sense : Whose Character it is to be quick-sighted in their Deliberations, constant in their Resolutions, unshaken in their Enterprizes, well inform'd what Party they are to take upon all Occasions, and consequently more cautious in their Choice.

The others Character on the contrary, is to be short sighted in their Views, prepossess'd by their Designs, as Rash to resolve, as Weak to execute. How vast is the Difference ! One is brisk and lively, and the other thoughtful and judicious ; One has a sharp agreeable Wit, the other good and solid. Which doubtless gave Occasion to a great Politician of our Times to say of these two sorts of Wit, that one was made for Pleasure, and the other for Business.

**III.**

To what purpose should we use Arguments, to prove the Truth of these Differences which Experience it self makes so evident ? 'Tis but casting our Eyes upon the daily Passages in the Commerce of the World.

World. How many Men are there that cannot tolerably acquit themselves in Conversation, who very cunningly wind themselves out of a Business? As dull and insipid as they are in Company, you will find them both sharp and successful in their Enterprizes. These Men neither delight, nor render themselves agreeable; but make a sound Judgment of Things, and become often useful and necessary. Quite contrary to flashy vain *Wits*, who are admir'd in Conversation; but are the worst of Men in Business; all Fire and Life to undertake, but have little Conduct to succeed.

Let us not stop here, but inquire farther into the Matter. Do we owe the wise Management of Publick Affairs to our Men of Wit? Is it a quick Imagination, or good Sense and Judgment that supports the Weight of them? 'Tis neither a vain Subtlety nor a pretended Delicacy, but a sound Capacity and Solidity of Mind, which makes us value those Illustrious Men that govern States and Kingdoms. With Submission to our *Wits* be it said, 'tis not their Destiny to be plac'd so high.

## IV.

There are whole Nations born with excellent Dispositions, that are as proper for the

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the Government of a State, as necessary for the Ease of Men in a private Capacity. In those Nations if Men be cold and slow, they are but the more clear sighted, and the wiser for it. One would think Nature had studied to cast them in a thicker Mould, and by the Solidity of their Judgments to make them amends for the Politeness she has denied them. If their Thoughts are not fine and lively, yet they argue wisely and judiciously, they don't affect to make an Ostentation of their Parts, so much as to be silent when 'tis proper, and reflect on what is before them. They keep an equal steady Pace, most commonly regular in their Actions, reserv'd in their Motions, and strictly united for the Publick Good which is in reality their own. Thus a prudent Simplicity raises them to true Greatness.

On these solid Foundations stands the whole Body they form, whose Members are united with so much Proportion, govern'd with so much Justness, kept up with so much Order and Precaution, that they are scarce ever liable to those fatal Distempers which at last destroy the most healthy Kingdoms. The Genius of the Nation in general animates this Body, and makes all its Actions constant, regular, and uniform.



form. This Genius presides in their Counsels, supports the Weight of their Affairs, and resolutely carries on their Enterprizes to the very last.

But it must be allow'd, that if Nature has been so favourable to those Nations, she has not been entirely unkind to others; and what she has not bountifully bestow'd in General, she has however granted to some in Particular. Some Defects we are born with, proper as it were to the Country and Climate we live in, and there are others, which we contract. In the same manner, there are both Natural and Acquir'd Qualities. And as, absolutely speaking, Men have very few good Qualities which they may not sometimes lose; so they have very few bad ones but they may at one time or other correct.

Good Education, Civil Society, the Conversation of the World, the Necessity of Affairs, Ripeness of Years, and above all the Use of Reason in that Age, may make great Alterations in the Mind, in any Place, or Countrey. For indeed, Reason is common to all States, and Nations, and if there be Climates, or happy Temperaments better disposed to follow it than others, there are none so very Unfortunate, but with due care may surmount those Obstacles.

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If some Men will not allow this, but will affirm that there are Invincible Obstacles, I will prevent their Objection by owning these two before hand, viz. *Stupidity* and *Wit*. 'Tis not without Reason that Stupidity may seem Invincible in some Tempers, a *Stupid Man* being so very slow and dull of Conception that he is incapable of all Instructions, and his Heaviness such, that it cannot be raised by any Counter balance.

But if we could as easily see, without any other Reflexion, what the Defects of a *Wit* are, I am well assured we should find him equally incurable. If there be no Way to conquer the Heaviness of a *Stupid Man*, what Means can be used to fix the Levity of a *Wit*? Education, such as is commonly bestow'd, serves only to countenance it. Pride, the natural Source of this Defect, do's always side with Imagination against Reason, which is too weak, and too much suspected to be regarded. The advantage of good Sense is neither perceived nor acknowledged. A Man of *Wit* is prepossess'd by his Talents and pretended good Parts, what then can we expect from him, if he be still Stubborn and Intractable? And how can he be otherwise? Nay, I will make it appear, that this Defect is so much the  
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more peculiar to a *Wit*, as it is the effect of Presumption, which is so natural to him.

## V.

'Tis a receiv'd Maxim among Politicians, that Strength without Counsel destroys it self, and that readiness to follow other Mens Advice, is a Quality no less commendable, than Ability in giving good Counsel. And indeed where is the Genius, how sagacious soever he be, who so orders his Steps in the Affairs he manages, as not to run often the hazard of mistaking himself, for want of asking the right Way, or taking a good Guide?

If any Man runs this hazard, 'tis chiefly your Witty Persons. For I see no Men less capable of giving good Advice, and none less disposed to take it. A famous *Politician* furnishes me with a Reason for it; *He that is not Wise of himself, says he, cannot be well advised; because he will neither regard, nor obey, and cannot follow the Precepts which are given him*; which is exactly the Case of a *Wit*.

The great Opinion he has of his own pretended Judgment and Knowledge, makes him scorn and despise the Sentiments of others, and interpret it a Weakness to submit to them. He that takes Advice depends  
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in some measure on him that gives it ; but a *Wit*, who is animated and puffed up by Pride, affects an Independency in all things. He looks on the Counsel which is given him, to be a kind of Tyranny exercised over the Liberty of his Thoughts ; and fears nothing so much as to be suspected of suffering himself to be guided by others.

With all his Presumption, and that all-sufficient Air he assumes, he is as forward to reprove others, as unfit to be reprov'd. He talks with Confidence, decides with Authority, promises good Success, and threatens bad, but will not allow Reason to examine the Causes. Thus taking upon him indiscreetly to force other Mens Minds, all his Designs at last prove ineffectual.

Men love to do all things to their own Mind and Fancy. Therefore 'tis a great Art to know how to give them good Advice, and make 'em relish it, which few Men are capable of. If we seriously reflect upon it, the Number of those who do not err, is greater than of those who know how to correct those that err.

**VI.**

Amongst the other Imbecillities of a *Wit*, one of the most considerable is, his Presumption of doing all Things by Force. A  
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quick and confus'd Sentiment, which hot boyling Blood, and sharp and agitated Animal Spirits inspire, make him foolishly presume that nothing escapes his Understanding. If he finds himself at a stand, he fancies, 'tis because none can go further; if he mistakes, 'tis because any Man else would have mistaken as well as himself; and taking the Strength and Extent of Imagination, for the Strength and Extent of the Mind, he allows all to Opinion, which seduces and leads him astray. That's the Rock against which he splits, Opinion is the Rock of your Men of *Wit*.

'Tis that false Light which is the Cause of all their Errors in Sciences, and of their bad Conduct in Affairs. From thence come so many unusual and extraordinary Counsels, ill contrived Enterprises, false Steps, vain Projects, and in the conclusion of all ill Success. For 'tis an Error to suppose that with little Penetration we can undertake many and great Things, and follow therein our Opinions, with little or no Insight. Neither should we imagine, that this Penetration and Insight is so natural to the Mind, that we need only let it act to compass our Aim. The Mind in one Sense grows weak and feeble, as well as the Body; both stand in need of Nourishment, and to be

be provided, either wherewith to support their Strength, or to acquire new when in want of it. Our Mind do's extend or contract, as we extend or contract it. And, as nothing gives it a greater Extent, than the good use we make of its Liberty and Judgment; so there is nothing that confines us more, than Infatuation, Rashness, and Prejudice. This naturally leads us to Inapplication, and Inapplication feeds our Prejudice. Both concur and assist each other, to spoil and corrupt the Mind. Inapplication makes us judge superficially of all Things, and decide as carelessly. Opinion is the occasion we never apply our selves to any Thing, for it seems to spare us that Trouble. We are not therefore to wonder, that the least attentive, and most infatuated Minds, are always the weakest.

VII.

If Opinion be so dangerous a Distemper, ought we not then to have a due esteem for the Liberty of the Mind, which is a Cure for it? And what can we think of such as are deprived of it? If a *Wit* wants strength of Reason, because his Thoughts are diffused, he has the more Occasion for Liberty and Judgment, because he is too apt to fall into Precipitation.

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This Defect, which is one of the most considerable, in relation to Affairs, does not only derive its Origin from the evil Qualities of the Mind, but also from the corrupt Dispositions of the Heart. So that if we should allow a *Wit* to have some Penetration and Judgment (which he often wants only for want of Attention) that would not be sufficient ; for the Heart often spoils what the Mind judiciously designs.

There arise sometimes from the Heart, certain Passions which like a thick Vapour darken the clearest and purest Understandings ; and we find certain Motions there, which strongly oppose the most regular proceedings of the Mind. Which makes it easie to conceive, that as the Mind, led by the false Lights of an irregular Imagination, often makes us err and go astray ; so the Heart, curbed and domineered by a foolish Passion, do's no less contribute to lead us out of the right Way.

The Mind has its Falsities and Illusions, and the Heart its Passions and Imbecillities ; and, as they are our two Guides in all our Actions, it follows that a good and uncorrupted Heart is of as great a Consequence and as necessary for us, as a sound and undisturb'd Mind.

I shall not here insist upon what is so evident

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dent to all the World. The horrible Disorders the Corruption of Mens Hearts, and the Exorbitancy of their Passions, occasion in Governments, are too well known to be denied. I shall only remark what is to my Subject, viz. what Genius's are, by their proper Character, more or less free from those Irregularities.

VIII.

There is so great a Conformity between the Disposition of the Mind, and that of the Heart, that for the most part they seem to me to follow each other. A false Mind is commonly attended with a vicious Heart. If that yields to Imagination, Passion soon gets the Victory over this ; and they never fail to communicate reciprocally to each other their good or evil Impressions. From whence I conclude, that the quicker the Imagination is, the stronger the Passions are, and Reason the weaker ; and that on the contrary the Passions are never so calm and the Mind so free, as when the Imagination is most subject to it, and in a good Temper.

This being once granted, what sort of Men must we allow to enjoy the greatest Liberty of Mind ; either those who by their natural Vanity abandon themselves to

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the flights of their Imagination, and so are Slaves to their Passions; or those that by their Moderation suppress the Impetuosity of 'em by keeping their Imagination under? Which of the two are most likely to be mistaken in their Judgment upon such publick or private Concerns as they are intrusted with? All the World agrees, that the effects of Passions and Imagination are always Enemies to Reason and good Sense. We must therefore allow that our gay sparkling *Wits*, whose Passions are undoubtedly more animated than the others, are less capable of the wise management of Affairs, which is the effect of Prudence and good Sense only.

The Passions, as another very judicious Author has remarked, are not only excited by the Objects, but likewise by the Opinions we are prepossessed with. The truth is, what we call our Blessings, or our Afflictions, is for the most part only such as we imagine it; which is the Reason why a Man thinks himself very unhappy, with that which wou'd make the Happiness of another. 'Tis Imagination for the most part which gives a form to Things, that diminishes, or augments, that lessens, or sets a value on them; and the most frequent Motions of the Passions are only the consequences

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quences of a sensible Application of the Soul to those Impressions and Figures which are made in the Brain. Those Men therefore who have their Brain fullest of these Images, must be most taken up with them; and by a necessary consequence most moved and concerned. Their Passion is their Reason, and Imagination their Guide. So that their Minds are surrounded with Clouds and Darkeness, which deprive them of the Liberty of their Judgments.

I K.

We must needs have a better Opinion of another sort of Men, whom a less nice and delicate Constitution of the Brain, and animal Spirits less quick and less in motion, make colder and more reserved. As their Imagination is less heated, consequently their Hearts ought to be less agitated, and their Minds freer.

The Violence of the Passions is everywhere felt, but they do not domineer in all Persons with the same Power. A nice flashy Wit may be carry'd away by the Strength of Passion, against which one of a reserved solid Judgment would make an easie Resistance: Who not being so sensibly touched by the Impression of the Objects,

and less subject to the Surprises of Imagination, (two infallible Causes of the Emotion of the Soul) must needs both enjoy a greater Tranquility and be capable of better reasoning.

I speak of Passions, as I have done of Imagination, and blame the Excess only. We should regulate but not destroy them; for a Man without Passions is a meer Chimera. Imagination has its Use, and Graces; the Passions in the same manner have their Use and Advantages. But like the best Things, they become dangerous by the ill application we make of them. They trouble, transport, and corrupt the Heart; they blind, disorder, and debauch the Mind a thousand ways; but 'tis only because we give 'em too much scope; for a Man who is not intirely Master of himself, suffers them to pass those Bounds which Nature has prescribed to them.

The Passions ought not to govern, and give Laws to Man ('tis that which makes 'em odious) but they ought to receive their Orders from Reason, and execute them, which often makes them necessary.

There is as much Action and Motion required for the Execution of an Enterprize, as Leisure and Prudence for the Deliberation. The Heart and the Mind share equally

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ly in the Glory of our noblest Actions. The Mind begins and conceives them, by its Understanding; the Heart prosecutes and finishes them, by its Motion. The Mind has the Credit of the Design, and the Heart that of the Success.

Success, says *Seneca*, is not under the Jurisdiction of the Wise. We undertake and Fortune gives Success. But Fortune loves Action and Motion; and this we plainly see in Young People, whom it favours more than others, by reason of their Briskness and Vivacity, and because they have more Confidence than Wisdom: 'Tis therefore in some measure necessary that the Heart, and Passions should be concern'd; for we can do very little without them, how excellent soever our Genius is; and sometimes all we do proceeds from them. Which perhaps made a great Politician say, that one had better be Impetuous, than Circumspect. But he tells us withal, that it is not always the surest Way; for, says he, *Fortune* is inconstant, and often abandons the Man whom she seems most to favour, tho' never so bold and active. The Reason he gives for it is excellent; *Fortune* changes according to the Times, but the Man does not alter his Measures. We must therefore keep a just *Medium*; joyn the wise proceed-

ings of the Mind with the motions of the Soul, and follow his Opinion, who to succeed in his Undertakings, neither required Merit, nor extraordinary Fortune, but only a happy Dexterity.

## X.

I applaud the Passions in those they only agitate, but I blame them in those they disorder. And because they may be more or less moderated, according to the Dispositions of those they animate, we need not fear to own, that certain cold and reserved Men (I mean cold without being weak; reserv'd without being heavy) may make a good Use of them, moderate their Violence, withstand their Efforts, and so preserve their Liberty and Judgment, which are the chief ingredients to qualify a Man for the management of Affairs.

'Tis the Unhappiness of Mankind, says a certain *Politician*, that it is hard to avoid one Inconvenience without falling into another. From whence he concludes, that Prudence requires we should know the nature of Inconveniencies, and always chuse the least. But how can we know them, if the Mind is not enough at liberty to discover them?

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I cannot set off the excellency of this admirable Quality, I mean the Liberty of the Mind, any way so well as by remarking that all Kingdoms have their particular Laws, all Arts their Rules, and all Sciences their Principles, to which all that depend on them is brought together as to its Center. But Politicks is the only Science that has nothing constant in its Maxims, nothing uniform in its Rules, nor well grounded in its Principles. As it wholly depends on the difference of Times and Conjunctures, it contradicts it self in its Principles, as often as the face of Affairs changes. So that its best Foundation is the Prudence and Ability of those that cultivate it; who governing themselves not so much by its Maxims, as by the change of Times, and present circumstances of Things, make use of Rules suitable to Affairs, rather than manage Affairs according to Rule.

Experience authorizes this Conduct, and we often find that two Persons have the same Success with different Methods, and two others use the same Method for the very same Thing with a quite contrary Success. Of two that go the same Way, and steer the same Course, one shall come home safe, and the other not; which happens from

from the diversity of Times, and Conjunctions. Therefore a wise and discreet Man suits his Conduct to Times and Affairs; according to the Saying of *Tacitus*, *Morem accommodari, prout conducatur*.

'Tis observable, that no Writings are more expos'd to Censure, than those of *Politicians*, because none so ill grounded. But the Man that will the most severely censure 'em, must expect to meet with other Criticks who will condemn his Censure, so arbitrary are their Decisions. And tho' with regard only to the Principles of *Politicians*, we should own more Solidity in them than others, yet if afterwards we descend from generals to particulars, the numerous Difficulties of the practical Part will but too well prove the Insufficiency of their Rules. Nothing but a solid extensive Judgment can conquer these Difficulties; As for Wit and Delicacy of Fancy, they signifie little or nothing.

What I say of *Politicks* in general, which concerns *Kingdoms* and *Republicks*, is to be apply'd to *Politicks* in particular, which concerns all Mankind; for every Man has one of his own making, as well as his Interest. If we do but observe it, we shall always find more than one way to compass our Ends, nor is there any general Rule.



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Rule for chusing which we ought to take. Reason alone, if we will consult it, can put us into the best Method.

XI.

Should I attempt here to descend into the particulars of all Mens Actions, and more especially the Proceedings of our *Wits*, to shew the Vanity of their Designs, and Irregularity of their Conduct in their Management of Affairs, I should soon confound myself with such abundance of Matter as would carry me farther than I purpose to go. I shall therefore content myself, before I make an end, to observe but one of those Ways our *Men of Wit* for the most part take to raise themselves in the World, which is to get themselves as near as they can to great Men and Princes.

I know that all the World sacrifices to Fortune, and that every one endeavours to make himself Happy. And as some place their Happiness in one Thing, others in another, according to the different Turn their Imagination gives to the Ideas they have of the Objects of their Passion, so it happens that Men take as many different Ways, as they Imagine Means to make themselves Happy. All Men do not take the same Methods, but every one takes what he thinks  
most

most proper for his Design, The most odd and Fantastical, in my Opinion, is that which Presumption suggests to some Men; I mean to make themselves known in the Courts of Princes, and boldly pass among the great Men for extraordinary Persons. As they vainly flatter themselves that their not being known, is the only Reason why they are not distinguish'd, they think of nothing but shewing themselves, and foolishly believe that this is all they have to do. The ordinary Ways by which every one ought to seek an Establishment most suitable for himself according to his Birth, and natural or acquir'd Qualities, for the Good of the Government he lives under, or his own proper Affairs, are absolutely unknown to our *Men of Wit*, who believing themselves to be extraordinary Men, think they must take extraordinary Methods; and are so vain upon their pretended Merit as to flatter themselves, that a *Prince* will break his usual Rules to raise and distinguish them from the Crowd.

There is scarce a *Wit* but thinks himself worthy of being a *Prince's Favourite*, and the principal Object of his Countenance. On this Foundation, his Pride makes him pretend to every Thing Honours, Favour, Recompences, all is due to him. A few  
gingling

gingling Verses, an insignificant Book, an Oration either written or pronounced, a pompous Epistle at the Head of a wretched Translation, are so many Pieces which in his Opinion ought to speak highly in his Favour, and give him a just Title to Rewards, which are due only to true Merit.

But in short, if he is dissatisfied with his Fortune, and his Hopes prove vain, he never fails of blaming the King and his Ministers for all the Disgrace and Trouble which his own ambitious Negligence, and Foolish Confidence have brought upon him. In that he supports very well his Character; for 'tis by the same Spirit of Presumption only that he applauds himself in secret for his pretended Qualifications, and murmurs at his Disgraces. Thus wanting both Strength and Liberty of Mind, infatuated and stubborn, and as useless to himself as he is to others, there is no Man more incapable of Business.

## XII.

'Tis now time to put an end to this Work, which has insensibly increas'd under my Hand much more than I expected, tho' I have endeavour'd to say nothing but what was absolutely necessary, to accomplish my Design. I was willing to show the World  
what

what an Opinion we ought to have of those we call *Wits*, and those we call *Stupid*; two Characters which I have considered as two Extreams, equally distant from that just *Medium*, where I thought my self oblig'd to place *Good and Solid Judgment*. I have not pass'd my Censure upon them without a due Examination; I have pursu'd them in all the Places they most affect to appear; but above all the *Man of Wit*, whom I have the most narrowly observed, because the most artificial and the most to be feared. I have made it appear how Insipid he is in his Conversation, how Vain and Superficial in his Writings, how Rash and Imprudent in Affairs. I need say no more, to prove that the *Judgment* is only estimable; and that *Wit* is false and deceitful in every respect.

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